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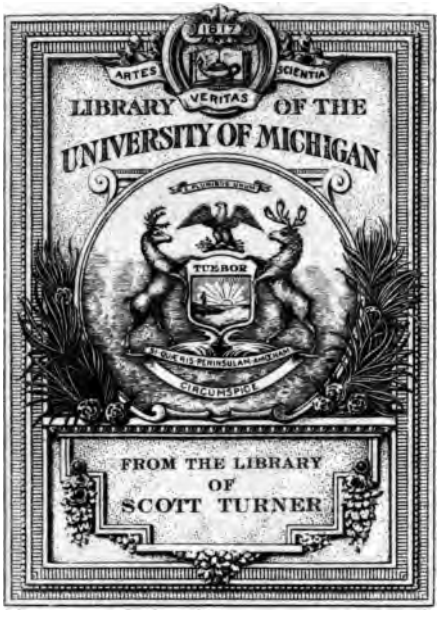

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Mrs Sophie S. Turner;

This Translation

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

TO

MR. FRANCIS A. NICHOLS,

WHO AS AN EDITOR

GAVE ME MY FIRST LITERARY OPPORTUNITIES.

June, 1900 at Boston

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CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE PECULIARITIES AND NATIONALITY OF THE PERSONAGES ARE GRADUALLY REVEALED.

"It must be acknowledged, however, that there is some good in life," observed one of the guests, who, leaning his elbow on the arm of his chair with a marble back, sat nibbling a root of a sugar water-lily.

"And evil also," added another, between two spells of coughing, having been nearly strangled by the prickles of the delicate fin of a shark.

"Let us be philosophers," then said an older person, whose nose supported an enormous pair of spectacles with broad glasses affixed to wooden bows. "To-day one comes near strangling, and to-morrow every thing flows smoothly as the fragrant draughts of this nectar. This is life, after all."

After these words, this easily pleased epicure

swallowed a glass of excellent warm wine, whose light vapor was slowly escaping from a metal teapot.

"For my part," continued a fourth guest, "existence seems very acceptable whenever one does nothing, and has the means which enable him to do nothing."

"You mistake," quickly replied the fifth: "happiness is in study and work. To acquire the greatest possible amount of knowledge is the way to render one's self happy."

"And to learn, when you sum it all up, that you know nothing."

"Is not that the beginning of wisdom?"

"But what is the end?"

"Wisdom has no end," philosophically answered the man with spectacles. "To have common sense would be supreme satisfaction."

Upon this the first guest directly addressed the host, who occupied the upper end of the table, — that is, the poorest place, — as the rules of politeness require. With indifference and inattention the latter listened silently to this discussion *inter pocula.*

"Come, let us hear what our host thinks of this rambling talk over the wine-cup? Does he find existence a blessing, or an evil? Is it yes, or no?

The host carelessly munched several water-melon-seeds, and for answer merely pouted his lips scornfully, like a man who seems to take interest in nothing.

"Pooh!" said he.

This is a favorite word with indifferent people, for it means every thing and nothing. It belongs to all languages, and must have a place in every dictionary on the globe, and is an articulated pout.

The five guests whom this *ennuyé* was entertaining then pressed him with arguments, each in favor of his own proposition; for they wished to have his opinion. He at first tried to avoid answering, but finally asserted that life was neither a blessing nor an evil: in his opinion, it was an "invention," rather insignificant, and, in short, not very encouraging.

"Ah! now our friend reveals himself."

"How can he speak thus, when his life has been as smooth as an unruffled rose-leaf?"

"And he so young!"

"Young and in good health!"

"In good health, and rich."

"Very rich."

"More than very rich."

"Too rich perhaps."

These remarks followed each other like rockets from a piece of fireworks, without even bringing a smile to the host's impassive face. He only shrugged his shoulders slightly, like a man who has never wished, even for an hour, to turn over the leaves in the book of his own life, and has not so much as cut the first pages.

And yet this indifferent man was thirty-one years at most; was in wonderfully good health;

possessed a great fortune, a mind that did not lack culture, an intelligence above the average; and had, in short, every thing, which so many others have not, to make him one of the happy of this world. And why was he not happy?

"Why?"

The philosopher's grave voice was now heard, speaking like a leader of a chorus of the early drama.

"Friend," he said, "if you are not happy here below, it is because, till now, your happiness has been only negative. With happiness as with health: to enjoy it, one should be deprived of it occasionally. Now, you have never been ill. I mean you have never been unfortunate: it is that which your life needs. Who can appreciate happiness if misfortune has never even for a moment assailed him?"

And at this remark, which was stamped with wisdom, the philosopher, raising his glass, full of champagne of the best brand, said, —

"I wish some shadow to fall athwart our host's sunlight, and some sorrows to enter his life." Saying which, he emptied his glass at one swallow.

The host made a gesture of assent, and again lapsed into his habitual apathy.

Where did this conversation take place? In a European dining-room, in Paris, London, Vienna, or St. Petersburg?

Were these six companions conversing together

in a restaurant in the Old or New World? And who were they, who, without having drunk more than usual, were discussing these questions in the midst of a repast?

Certainly they were not Frenchmen, because they were not talking politics.

They were seated at a table in an elegantly decorated saloon of medium size. The last rays of the sun were streaming through the network of blue and orange window-panes, and past the open windows the evening breeze was swinging garlands of natural and artificial flowers; and a few variegated lanterns mingled their pale light with the dying gleams of day. Above the windows were carved arabesques, enriched with varied sculpture, and representing celestial and terrestrial beauty, and animals and vegetables of a strange fauna and flora.

On the walls of the saloon, which were hung in silken tapestry, were shining broad, double-bevelled mirrors; and on the ceiling a "punka," moving its painted percale wings, rendered the temperature endurable.

The table was a vast quadrilateral of black lacquer-work, and, being uncovered, reflected the numerous pieces of silver and porcelain as a slab of the purest crystal might have done. There were no napkins, only simple squares of ornamented paper, a sufficient supply of which was furnished each guest. Around the table stood chairs with marble backs, far preferable in this latitude to the covering of modern furniture.

The attendants were very prepossessing young girls, in whose black hair were mingled lilies and chrysanthemums, and round whose arms bracelets of gold and jade were coquettishly wound. Smiling and sprightly, they served or removed dishes with one hand, while with the other they gracefully waved a large fan, which restored the currents of air displaced by the punka on the ceiling.

The repast left nothing to be desired. One could not imagine any thing more delicate than the cooking, which was both neat and artistic; for the Bignon of the place, knowing that he was catering to connoisseurs, surpassed himself in the preparation of the five hundred dishes which composed the *menu*.

In the first course there were sugared cakes, caviare, fried grasshoppers, dried fruits, and oysters from Ning-po. Then followed, at short intervals, poached eggs of the duck, pigeon, and lapwing; swallows' nests with buttered eggs; fricasees of "ging-seng;" stewed sturgeons' gills; whales' nerves with sugar sauce; fresh-water tadpoles; a ragout of the yolks of crabs' eggs, sparrows' gizzards, and sheeps' eyes pierced with a pointed bit of garlic for flavoring; *ravinoli*[1] prepared with the milk of apricot-stones; a stew of holothuria. Bamboo-shoots in their juice, sugared salads of young roots, pine-apples from Singapore, roasted earth-nuts, salted almonds, savory mangoes, fruits

[1] TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. — An Italian dish, a compound of vermicelli, eggs, cheese, and green herbs, prepared in the form of fritters.

of the "long-yen" with white flesh, and "li-tchi" with pale pulp, water caltrops, and preserved Canton oranges composed the last course of a repast which had lasted three hours, — a repast largely watered with beer, champagne, Chao Chigne wine; and the inevitable rice, which, placed between the lips of the guests by the aid of chop-sticks, was to crown at dessert the wisely arranged bill of fare.

The moment came at last for the young girls to bring, not those bowls of European fashion which contain a perfumed liquid, but napkins saturated with warm water, which each of the guests passed over his face with extreme satisfaction.

It was, however, only an *entr'acte* of the repast, — an hour of *far niente*, whose moments were to be filled with music; for soon a *troupe* of singers and instrumentalists entered the saloon. The singers were pretty young girls of modest appearance and behavior. What music and method was theirs! — a mewing and clucking without measure or tunefulness, rising in sharp notes to the utmost limit of perception by the auditory nerves. As for the instruments, there were violins whose strings became entangled in those of the bow, guitars covered with serpents' skins, screeching clarinets, and harmonicas resembling small portable pianos; and all worthy of the songs and the singers, to whom they formed a noisy accompaniment.

The leader of this discordant orchestra pre-

sented the programme of his *répertoire* as he entered; and at a motion from the host, who gave him *carte blanche*, his musicians played the "Bouquet of Ten Flowers," — a piece very much in the *mode* at the time, and the rage in fashionable society.

Then the singing and performing *troupe*, having been well paid in advance, withdrew, carrying with them many a *bravo*, with which they would yet reap a rich harvest in the neighboring saloons.

The six companions then left their seats, but only to pass from one table to another, which movement was accompanied with great ceremony and compliments of all kinds.

On this second table each found a small cup with a lid ornamented with a portrait of Bôdhidharama, the celebrated Buddhist monk, standing on his legendary raft. Each received a pinch of tea, which he steeped in the boiling water in his cup, and drank almost immediately without sugar.

And what tea! It was not to be feared either that the house of Gibb-Gibb & Co., who furnished it, had adulterated it with a mixture of foreign leaves; or that it had already undergone a first infusion, and was only good to use in sweeping carpets; or that an unscrupulous preparer had colored it yellow with curcuma, or green with Prussian blue. It was imperial tea in all its purity, and was composed of those precious leaves of the first harvest in March which are similar to the flower itself, and are seldom gathered; for loss

of its leaves causes the death of the plant. It was composed of those leaves which young children alone, with carefully gloved hands, are allowed to cull.

A European could not have found words of praise in number sufficient to extol this beverage, which the six companions were slowly sipping, without going into ecstasies, like connoisseurs who were used to it; but, it must be confessed, they were really unable to appreciate the delicacy of the excellent concoction. They were gentlemen of the best society, richly dressed in the "han-chaol," — a light under-waistcoat; the "macoual," — a short tunic; and the "haol," — a long robe, buttoning at the side. They wore yellow sandals and open-work hose; silk pantaloons, fastened at the waist with a tasselled sash; and a plastron of fine embroidered silk on their bosom, and a fan at their waist. These amiable persons were born in the same country where the tea-plant once a year produces its harvest of fragrant leaves. This repast, in which swallows' nests, fish of the holothurian species, whales' nerves, and sharks' fins appeared, was partaken of as the delicacy of the viands deserved; but its *menu*, which would have astonished a foreigner, did not surprise them in the least. But what did surprise them was the statement which their host made to them, as they were at last about to leave the table, and from which they understood why he had entertained them that day.

The cups were still full, and the indifferent gentleman, with his eyes fixed on vacancy, and his elbow leaning on the table, was about to empty his cup for the last time, when he expressed himself in these words: —

"My friends, listen to me without laughing. The die is cast. I am about to introduce into my life a new element, which perhaps will dispel its monotony. Will it be a blessing, or a misfortune? The future only can tell. This dinner, to which I have invited you, is my farewell dinner to bachelor life. In a fortnight I shall be married, and" —

"And you will be the happiest of men," cried the optimist. "Behold! all the signs are in your favor."

In fact, the lamps flickered, and cast a pale light around; the magpies chattered on the arabesques of the windows; and the little tea-leaves floated perpendicularly in the cups. So many lucky omens could not fail.

Therefore all congratulated their host, who received these compliments with the most perfect composure. But, as he did not name the person destined to the *rôle* of "new element," and the one whom he had chosen, no one was so indiscreet as to question him on the subject.

But the philosopher's voice did not mingle in the general concert of congratulations. With his arms crossed, his eyes partly closed, and an ironical smile on his lips, he seemed to approve

those complimenting no more than he did the one complimented.

The latter then rose, placed his hand on his friend's shoulder, and, in a voice that seemed less calm than usual, asked, —

"Am I, then, too old to marry?"

"No."

"Too young?"

"No: neither too young nor too old."

"Do you think I am doing wrong?"

"Perhaps so."

"But she whom I have chosen, and with whom you are acquainted, possesses every quality necessary to make me happy."

"I know it."

"Well?"

"It is you who have not all that is necessary to make you so. To be bored single in life is bad, but to be bored double is worse."

"Then I shall never be happy?"

"No: not so long as you do not know what misfortune is."

"Misfortune cannot reach me."

"So much the worse; for then you are incurable."

"Ah! these philosophers!" cried the youngest of the guests. "One should not listen to them. They are machines with theories. They manufacture all kinds of theories, which are trash, and good for nothing in practice. Get married, — get married, my friend! I should do the same, had I

not made a vow never to do any thing. Get married; and, as our poets say, may the two phœnixes always appear to you tenderly united! Friends, I drink to the happiness of our host."

"And I," responded the philosopher, "drink to the near interposition of some protecting divinity, who, in order to make him happy, will cause him to pass through the trial of misfortune."

At this odd toast the guests arose, brought their fists together as boxers do before beginning a contest, and, having alternately lowered and raised them while bowing their heads, took leave of each other.

From the description of the saloon in which this entertainment was given, and the foreign *menu* which composed it, as well as from the dress of the guests, with their manner of expressing themselves, — perhaps, too, from the singularity of their theories, — the reader has surmised that we have had to do with the Chinese; not with those "Celestials" who look as if they had been unglued from a Chinese screen, or had escaped from a pottery vase where they properly belonged, but with the modern inhabitants of the Celestial Empire, already Europeanized by their studies, voyages, and frequent communication with the civilized people of the West.

Indeed, it was in the saloon of one of the flower-boats on the River of Pearls at Canton that the rich Kin-Fo, accompanied by the inseparable Wang the philosopher, had just entertained four of the

best friends of his youth, — Pao-Shen, a mandarin of the fourth class, and of the order of the blue button; Yin-Pang, a rich silk-merchant in Apothecary Street; Tim, the high liver; and Houal, the literary man.

And this took place on the twenty-seventh day of the fourth moon, during the first of those five periods which so poetically divide the hours of the Chinese night.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH KIN-FO AND THE PHILOSOPHER ARE MORE FULLY DESCRIBED.

THE reason why Kin-Fo gave a farewell dinner to his Canton friends was, because he passed a part of his youth in the capital of the province of Kuang-Tung. Of the numerous comrades a wealthy and generous young man is sure to have, the only ones left him at this time were the four guests who were present on the flower-boat. It would have been useless for him to have tried to bring the others together, as they were scattered by the various accidents of life.

Kin-Fo lived in Shang-hai, and, being worn out with *ennui*, was now for a change spending a few days in Canton. This evening he intended to take the steamboat which stops at several points along the coast, and return quietly home to his yamen.

The reason that Wang accompanied Kin-Fo was because the philosopher could never leave his pupil, who did not want for lessons; though, to tell the truth, he paid no heed to them, and they were just so many maxims and wise sayings lost. The "theory-machine," however, as Tim the high liver called him, was never weary of producing them.

Kin-Fo was a perfect type of the northern Chinese, whose race is being transformed, and who have never united with the Tartars. He was of a stamp differing from that usually found in the southern provinces, where the high and low classes are more intimately blended with the Mandshurian race: he had not a drop of Tartar blood in his veins, neither from father nor mother, whose ancestors kept secluded after the conquest.

He was tall, well built, fair rather than yellow; with straight eyebrows, and eyes following the horizontal, and but slightly raised towards the temple; with a straight nose, and a face that was not flat. He would have been distinguished even among the finest specimens of Western people.

Indeed, if Kin-Fo appeared at all like a Chinaman, it was because of his carefully shaved skull; his smooth, hairless brow and neck; and his magnificent braid, which started at the back of his head, and rolled down like a serpent of jet. He was very careful about his person, and wore a delicate mustache, which made a half-circle over his upper lip; and an imperial, which was exactly like a rest in musical notation. His nails were more than a centimetre long, a proof that he belonged to those fortunate men who are not obliged to work. Perhaps, too, his careless walk and haughty bearing added still more to the *comme il faut* appearance of his whole person.

Besides, Kin-Fo was born at Pekin, an advantage of which the Chinese are very proud. To

any one who would have asked him where he came from, he would have answered proudly, "I come from above."

His father, Tchoung-Heou, was living at Pekin when he was born; and he was six years old when the former settled at Shang-hai.

This worthy Chinaman, who came from a fine family in the northern part of the empire, like all his compatriots, had a remarkable capacity for business. During the first years of his career, he bartered and sold every thing that the rich and populous territory produces; such as paper goods from Swatow, silks from Soo-Choo, sugar-candy from Formosa, tea from Han-kow and Fou-chow, iron from Ho-nan, and red and yellow copper from the province of Yunnan. His principal business-house, his "hong," was at Shang-hai; but he had branch establishments at Nankin, Tien-sing, Macao, and Hong-Kong. As he was a close follower of European progress, he shipped his goods on English steamers, and kept himself informed by cablegram of the state of the silk and opium market at Lyons and Calcutta. He was not opposed to these agents of progress, steam and electricity, as are the majority of the Chinese, who are under the influence of mandarins and the government, whose prestige is gradually being lessened by progress.

In short, Tchoung-Heou managed so shrewdly in his business in the interior of the empire, as well as in his transactions with Portuguese,

French, English, or American houses, in Shanghai, Macao, and Hong-Kong, that, when Kin-Fo came into the world, his fortune exceeded four hundred thousand dollars; and, during the years that followed, this capital was doubled, on account of the establishment of a new traffic, which might be called the "coolie trade of the New World."

It is well known that the population of China is in excess, and out of all proportion to the vast extent of the territory, which is poetically divided into the various names of Celestial Empire, Central Empire, and Empire or Land of Flowers.

Its inhabitants are estimated at not less than three hundred and sixty million, which is almost a third of the population of the earth. Now, little as the Chinaman eats, he nevertheless eats; and China, even with its numerous rice-fields, and extensive cultivation of millet and wheat, does not provide enough to nourish him. Hence there are more inhabitants than can be cared for; and their only desire is to escape through some of the loopholes which the English and French cannon have made in the moral and material walls of the Celestial Empire.

This surplus has poured into North America, and principally into the State of California, but in such multitudes that Congress has been obliged to take restrictive measures against the invasion, which is rather impolitely called "the yellow pest." As was observed, fifty million Chinese emigrants in the United States would not have sensibly

diminished the population of China, and it would have brought about a blending with the Anglo-Saxon race, to the benefit of the Mongolian.

However this may be, the exodus was conducted on a large scale. These coolies, living on a handful of rice, a cup of tea, and a pipe of tobacco, and apt at all trades, met with remarkably quick success in Virginia, Salt Lake, Oregon, and, above all, the State of California, where they greatly reduced the wages of manual labor.

Companies were then formed for the transportation of these inexpensive emigrants; and there were five which had charge of the enlisting in the five provinces of the Celestial Empire, and a sixth which was stationed at San Francisco. The former shipped, and the latter received, the merchandise; while an additional agency, called the Ting-Tong, re-shipped them.

This requires an explanation.

The Chinese are very willing to expatriate themselves to seek their fortune with the "Melicans," as they call the people of the United States, but on one condition, that their bodies shall be faithfully brought back, and buried in their native land. This is one of the principal conditions of the contract, — a *sine qua non* clause, which is binding on these companies with regard to the emigrant, and cannot be eluded.

Therefore the Ting-Tong — or, in other words, the Agency of the Dead, which draws its funds from private sources — is charged with freighting

the "corpse steamers," which leave San Francisco fully loaded for Shang-hai, Hong-Kong, or Tien-Sing. Here was a new business, and a new source of profit, which the shrewd and enterprising Tchoung-Heou foresaw. At the time of his death, in 1866, he was a director in the Kouang-Than Company in the province of that name, and sub-director of the Treasury for the Dead in San Francisco.

Kin-Fo, having neither father nor mother, was heir to a fortune valued at four million francs, invested in stock in the Central Bank in California, and which he had the good sense to let remain there.

When he lost his father, the young heir, who was nineteen years old, would have been alone in the world, had it not been for Wang, the inseparable Wang, who filled the place of mentor and friend.

But who was this Wang? For seventeen years he had lived in the yamen at Shang-hai, and was the guest of the father before he became that of the son. But where did he come from? What was his past? All these somewhat difficult questions Tchoung-Heou and Kin-Fo alone could have answered; and if they had considered it proper to do so, which was not probable, this is what one would have learned from them:—

No one is unaware that China, is, *par excellence*, the kingdom where insurrections last many years, and carry off hundreds of thousands of men. Now,

in the seventeenth century, the celebrated dynasty of Ming, of Chinese origin, had been in power in China three hundred years, when, in 1644, the chief, feeling too weak to resist the rebels who threatened the capital, asked aid of a Tartar king.

The king, who did not need to be entreated, hastened to his assistance, drove out the rebels, and profited by the situation to overthrow him who had implored his aid, and proclaimed his own son, Chun-Tche, emperor.

From this period the Tartar rule was substituted for that of the Chinese, and the throne was occupied by Mandshurian emperors.

The two races, especially among the lower classes, gradually came together; but among the rich families of the north they did not mingle. Therefore the type still retains its characteristics, particularly in the centre of the western provinces of the empire. There the "irreconcilables" who remained faithful to the fallen dynasty took refuge.

Kin-Fo's father was one of the latter; and he did not belie the traditions of his family, who refused to enter into compact with the Tartars. A rebellion against the foreign power, even after a rule of three hundred years, would have found him ready to join it. It is unnecessary to add that his son, Kin-Fo, fully shared his political opinions.

Now, in 1860, there still reigned that emperor, S'Hiene-Fong, who declared war against England and France, — a war ended by the treaty of Pekin on the 25th of October of the same year.

But before that date a formidable uprising threatened the reigning dynasty. The Tchang-Mao, or the Tai-ping, — the "long-haired rebels," — took possession of Nankin in 1853, and Shang-hai in 1855. After S'Hiene-Fong's death, his son had great difficulty in repulsing the Tai-ping. Without the Viceroy Li, and Prince Kong, and especially the English Colonel Gordon, he, perhaps, would not have been able to save his throne.

The Tai-ping, the declared enemies of the Tartars, being strongly organized for rebellion, wished to replace the dynasty of the Tsing for that of the Wang. They formed four distinct armies, — the first, under a black banner, appointed to kill; the second, under a red banner, to set fire; the third, under a yellow banner, to pillage; and the fourth, under a white banner, to provision the other three.

There were important military operations in Kiang-Sou; and Soo-Choo and Kia-Hing, five leagues distant from Shang-hai, fell into the power of the rebels, and were recovered, not without difficulty, by the imperial troops.

Shang-hai, which had been seriously threatened, was also attacked on the 18th of August, 1860, at the time that Gens. Grant and Montauban, commanding the Anglo-French army, were cannonading the forts of Pei-ho.

Now, at this time, Tchoung-Heou, Kin-Fo's father, was living near Shang-hai, not far from the magnificent bridge thrown across the river by

Chinese engineers at Sou-Choo. He disapproved of this rebellion of the Tai-ping, since it was chiefly directed against the Tartar dynasty.

This, then, was the state of affairs when, on the evening of the 18th of August, after the rebels had been driven out of Shang-hai, the door of Tchoung-Heou's house suddenly opened, and a fugitive, having dodged his pursuers, came to throw himself at the feet of Tchoung-Heou. The unfortunate man had no weapon with which to defend himself; and, if he to whom he came to ask for shelter had given him up to the imperial soldiers, he would have been killed.

Kin-Fo's father was not the man to betray a Tai-ping who sought refuge in his house; and he closed the door, and said, —

"I do not wish to know, and I never shall know, who you are, what you have done, or whence you come. You are my guest, and for that reason only will be perfectly safe at my house."

The fugitive tried to speak to express his gratitude, but scarcely had strength.

"Your name?" asked Tchoung-Heou.

"Wang."

It was Wang indeed, saved by Tchoung-Heou's generosity, — a generosity which would have cost the latter his life if any one had suspected that he was giving an asylum to a rebel. But Tchoung-Heou was like one of those men of ancient times with whom every guest is sacred.

A few years later the uprising of the rebels was

forever repressed. In 1864 the Tai-ping chief, who was besieged at Nankin, poisoned himself to escape falling into the hands of the Imperials.

Wang, ever since that day, had remained in his benefactor's house. He was never obliged to say any thing about his past; for no one questioned him. Perhaps they feared they might hear too much. The atrocities committed by the rebels were frightful, it was said; and under what banner Wang had served, — the yellow, red, black, or white, — it was better to remain in ignorance, and to fancy that he belonged only to the provisioning column.

Wang, however, was delighted with his lot, and continued to be the guest of this hospitable house. After Tchoung-Heou's death, his son, being so accustomed to the amiable man's company, would never be parted from him.

But, in truth, at the time when this story begins, who would have ever recognized a former Tai-ping, a murderer, plunderer, or incendiary from choice, in this philosopher of fifty-five years, this moralist in spectacles, playing the part of Chinaman, with eyes drawn towards the temples, and with the traditional mustache? With his long robe of a modest color, and a waist rising towards his chest from a growing obesity; with his headdress regulated according to the imperial decree, — that is to say, with a fur hat with the rim raised around the crown, from whence streamed tassels of red cord, — did he not look the worthy professor

of philosophy, and one of those *savants* who write fluently in the eighty thousand characters of Chinese handwriting, and like a *littérateur* of the superior dialect receiving the first prize in the examination of doctors, with the right to pass under the grand gate at Pekin, which is an honor reserved for the Sons of Heaven?

Perhaps, after all, the rebel, forgetting a past full of horror, had improved by contact with the honest Tchoung-Heou, and had gradually branched off to the road of speculative philosophy.

That is why, on this evening, Kin-Fo and Wang, who never left each other, were together at Canton, and why, after this farewell dinner, both were going along the wharves to seek a steamer to take them quickly to Shang-hai.

Kin-Fo walked on in silence, and even somewhat thoughtfully. Wang, looking round to the right and to the left, philosophizing to the moon and the stars, passed smilingly under the Gate of Eternal Purity, which he did not find too high for him, and under the Gate of Eternal Joy, whose doors seemed to open on his own existence, and finally saw the Pagoda of the Five Hundred Divinities vanishing in the distance.

The steamer "Perma" was under full steam. Kin-Fo and Wang went on board, and entered the cabins reserved for them. The rapid current of the River of Pearls, which daily bears along the bodies of those condemned to death with the mud from its shores, carried the boat swiftly

onward. It sped like an arrow between the ruins made by French cannon, and left standing here and there; past the pagoda Haf-Way, nine stories high; and past Point Jardyne, near Whampoa, where the large ships anchor, between the islands and the bamboo palisades of the two shores.

The one hundred and fifty kilometres — that is to say, the three hundred and seventy-five leagues which separate Canton from the mouth of the river — were travelled in the night.

At sunrise the "Perma" passed the Tiger's Mouth, and then the two bars of the estuary. The Victoria Peak of the isle of Hong-Kong, eighteen hundred and twenty-five feet high, appeared for a moment through the morning mist, when, after the most successful of passages, Kin-Fo and the philosopher, leaving the yellowish waters of the Blue River behind them, landed at Shanghai, on the shores of the province of Kiang-Nan.

CHAPTER III.

IN WHICH THE READER, WITHOUT FATIGUE, CAN GLANCE OVER THE CITY OF SHANG-HAI.

A CHINESE proverb says, —

"When sabres are rusty, and spades bright;
"When prisons are empty, and granaries full;
"When the steps of the temples are worn by the feet of worshippers, and the court-yards of the tribunals are covered with grass;
"When physicians go on foot, and bakers on horseback, —
"The empire is well governed."

It is a good proverb, and might be applied to all the States of the Old and New World. But, if there is a single one where this *desideratum* is still far from being realized, it is precisely the Celestial Empire: for there it is the sabres which are bright, and the spades rusty; the prisons which are overflowing, and the granaries empty. The bakers rest more than the physicians; and, if the pagodas attract worshippers, the tribunals, on the contrary, lack neither criminals nor litigants.

Besides, a kingdom of a hundred and eighty thousand square miles, which from north to south measures more than eight hundred leagues, and

from east to west more than nine hundred, which counts eighteen vast provinces, not to mention the tributary countries, — Mongolia, Mandshuria, Thibet, Tonking, Corea, the Loo-Choo Islands, &c., — can be but very imperfectly governed. If the Chinese have a faint suspicion of this, foreigners are not at all deceived. The emperor, who is called the Son of Heaven, the father and mother of his subjects, who makes or unmakes laws at his pleasure, and has power of life or death over every one, and to whom the revenues of the empire are a birthright, — the sovereign before whom brows are bowed to the dust, — shut up in his palace, which is sheltered by the walls of a triple city, — alone, perhaps, considers that every thing is for the best in the best of worlds. It would be unnecessary even to try to prove to him that he is mistaken. A Son of Heaven is never mistaken.

Did Kin-Fo have any reason to think that it would be better to be governed in the European than in the Chinese manner? One would be tempted to think so. Indeed, he lived, not in Shang-hai, but out of the city, in a part of the English concession, which preserves a sort of freedom that is highly prized.

Shang-hai, the city proper, is situated on the left shore of the little River Houang-Pou, which, uniting at a right angle with the Wousung, flows into the Yang-Tze-Kiang, or Blue River, and from there is lost in the Yellow Sea.

It is an oval, extending from north to south, and surrounded by high walls, with an outlet of gates opening on its suburbs. An inextricable network of paved lanes, which would soon wear out sweeping-machines, were they to clean them; gloomy shops, without shutters or any display of goods in their windows, and in which the shop-keepers perform their duties naked to the waist; not a carriage, not a palanquin, and scarcely any horsemen; here and there a few native temples or foreign chapels; for promenades, a "tea-garden," and a rather pebbly parade-ground, built on an embankment, filled with ancient rice-fields, and subject to marshy emanations; a population of two hundred thousand inhabitants in the streets and narrow houses, — all compose this city, which, though as a place of residence is hardly desirable, is, nevertheless, of great commercial importance.

In this city, after the treaty of Nankin, foreigners for the first time possessed the right to establish stores, and here was the great port opened in China to European traffic: therefore, outside of Shang-hai and its suburbs, the government ceded, for an annual sum, three portions of territory to the French, English, and Americans, who number about two thousand.

Of the French concession, there is little to be said, it being the least important. Nearly the whole of it is within the northern enclosure of the city, reaching as far as the Brook Yang-King-Pang, which separates it from the English territory.

There stand the churches of the Lazarists and Jesuits, who, four miles from Shang-hai, own the college of Tsikave, where they confer bachelors' degrees.

But this little French colony does not equal its neighbors: far from it. Of the ten commercial houses founded in 1861, there remain but three; and they even preferred to establish the discount-broker's office on the English concession.

The American territory occupies that part of the country extending to Wousung, and is separated from the English territory by the Soo-Choo Creek, which is spanned by a wooden bridge. Here are the Hotel Astor, and the Church of the Missions, and the docks erected for the repair of European ships.

But, of the three concessions, the most flourishing is indisputably the English. Here are sumptuous dwellings on the wharves, houses with verandas and gardens, palaces of the merchant princes, the Oriental Bank, the "hong" of the celebrated house which bears the name of the firm of Lao-Tchi-Tchang, the stores of the Jardynes, Russels, and other great merchants, the English club, the theatre, the tennis-court, the park, the race-course, and the library. Such is that wealthy creation of the Anglo-Saxons, which has justly merited the name of "Model Colony."

That is why, on this privileged territory, under the patronage of a liberal administration, one will not be astonished, as M. Leon Russet says, to find

"a Chinese city of an especially individual character, which has not its counterpart anywhere."

In this little corner of the earth, the foreigner, arriving by the picturesque Blue River, sees four flags unfurled by the same breeze, — the three French colors, the "yacht" of the United Kingdom, the American stars, and the cross of St. André, yellow with a green background, of the Flowery Empire.

As for the environs of Shang-hai, they are a flat, treeless country, cut up by narrow, stony roads and footpaths, laid out at right angles, or hollowed out by cisterns and "arroyos" distributing the water through numerous rice-fields, or furrowed by canals conveying junk-boats, which start in the middle of the fields, like the canal-boats through Holland. They are a sort of vast tableau, very green in tone, a picture without a frame.

"The Perma," on her arrival, anchored at the wharf of the native port, before the eastern suburbs of Shang-hai; and it was there that Wang and Kin-Fo landed in the afternoon.

The coming and going of business people created a traffic that was enormous on the shore, and beyond description on the river.

The junk-boats by hundreds, the flower-boats, the sampans (a kind of gondola managed by the scull), the gigs, and other boats, of every size, formed a kind of floating city inhabited by a maritime population, which cannot be reckoned at less than forty thousand souls, — a population main-

tained in an inferior situation, and the wealthy part of which cannot rise to the rank of the literary or mandarin class.

The two friends sauntered along the wharf among the strange, motley crowd, which comprised merchants of every kind; venders of arachides, betel-nuts, and oranges, with some from the Indian orange-tree; seamen of every nation, water-carriers, fortune-tellers, bonzes, lamas, Catholic priests clothed in Chinese fashion with pigtail and fan, native soldiers, "tipaos" (the town-bailiffs of the place), and "compradores," or deputy-brokers, as they might be called, who transact business for European merchants.

Kin-Fo, with his fan in his hand, cast his usual indifferent look over the crowd, and took no interest in what was passing around him. Neither the metallic sound of the Mexican piasters, nor that of the silver taels and copper sapeques, which sellers and buyers were exchanging with considerable noise, could have disturbed him. He had the means to buy out the entire suburbs for cash.

As for Wang, he opened his immense yellow umbrella, which was decorated with black monsters, and constantly faced the east as every high-bred Chinaman should, and looked around everywhere for objects worthy of his observation.

As he passed before the eastern gate, his eyes fell by chance on a dozen bamboo cages, from which the faces of criminals who had been beheaded the evening before grinned at him. "Per-

haps," said he, "there is something better to do than to cut off people's heads; and that is, to make them stronger."

Kin-Fo, no doubt, did not hear Wang's reflection, which, on the part of a former Tai-ping, would have astonished him.

Both continued to follow the wharf, winding around the walls of the Chinese city.

At the extremity of the outskirts, just as they were about to set foot on the French concession, a native in a long blue robe, who was striking a buffalo-horn with a small stick, which produced a harsh, grating sound, attracted quite a crowd around him.

"A sien-cheng," said the philosopher.

"What is it to us?" added Kin-Fo.

"Friend," answered Wang, "ask him your fortune. This is a good time, when you are about to be married."

Kin-Fo started on his way again; but Wang held him back.

The "sien-cheng" is a sort of popular prophet, who for a few sapeques makes a business of foretelling the future. His only professional apparatus is a cage, enclosing a little bird, which he hangs on one of the buttons of his robe, and a pack of sixty-four cards, representing figures of gods, men, or animals. The Chinese of every class, who are generally superstitious, make nothing of the predictions of the sien-cheng, who, probably is not in earnest.

At a sign from Wang, he spread a piece of cotton cloth on the ground, placed his cage on it, drew out his cards, shuffled, and placed them on this carpeting in a manner to display their figures. The door of the cage was then opened; and a little bird came out, selected one of the cards, and went back again, after having received a kernel of rice as a reward.

The sien-cheng turned over the card. It bore the face of a man, and a device written in kunan-runa, the mandarin language of the north and an official language used by educated people.

Then, addressing Kin-Fo, the fortune-teller predicted what those of his profession in all countries invariably predict without compromising themselves, — that, after undergoing some near trial, he would enjoy ten thousand years of happiness.

"One," answered Kin-Fo, "one only, and I won't insist upon the rest."

Then he threw a silver tael on the ground, which the prophet scrambled for as a hungry dog does for a bone. Such windfalls did not come to him every day.

After this, Wang and his pupil proceeded to the French colony, — the former thinking of the prediction, which accorded with his own theories about happiness; the latter knowing well that no trial could come to him.

They passed the French consulate, and ascended as far as the culvert thrown across Yang-King-Pang, and crossed the brook; then went in

an oblique direction across the English territory, in order to reach the wharf at the European port.

It was just striking twelve; and business, which had been very active throughout the morning, stopped as if by magic. The business-day was ended, we may say; and quiet took the place of bustle, even in the English city, which had become Chinese in this respect.

At this moment several foreign ships were arriving in port, most of them under the flag of the United Kingdom. Nine out of ten, we must state, were laden with opium. This brutalizing substance, this poison with which England encumbers China, creates a traffic amounting to more than two hundred and sixty million francs, and returns three hundred per cent profit. In vain has the Chinese government tried to prevent the importation of opium into the Celestial Empire. The war of 1841 and the treaty of Nankin gave free entry to English merchandise, and yielded the day to the merchant princes. We must also add, that, if the government of Pekin has gone so far as to proclaim death to every Chinaman who sells opium, there are arrangements that can be made, through a financial medium, with the treasurers of the ruler; and it is even believed that the mandarin governor of Shang-hai lays up a million annually by merely shutting his eyes to the acts of his subordinates.

We need not add that neither Kin-Fo nor Wang were addicted to the detestable habit of smoking

opium, which destroys all the elasticity of the system, and quickly leads to death. Therefore not an ounce of this substance had even entered the costly dwelling which the two friends reached an hour after landing on the wharf at Shang-hai.

Wang (the remark is still more surprising because it is that of an ex-Tai-ping) did not hesitate to say, "Perhaps there is something better than importing that which brutalizes a whole nation. Commerce is well enough; but philosophy is better. Let us be philosophers before all! let us be philosophers!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH KIN-FO RECEIVES AN IMPORTANT LETTER, WHICH IS EIGHT DAYS BEHIND TIME.

A YAMEN is a collection of various buildings ranged along a parallel line, which is cut across perpendicularly by a second line of kiosks and pavilions. Usually the yamen serves as a dwelling for mandarins of high rank, and belongs to the emperor; but wealthy celestials are not forbidden to have one. It was in one of these sumptuous hotels that the opulent Kin-Fo lived.

Wang and his pupil stopped at the principal gate, which opened on the vast enclosure surrounding the various structures of the yamen, and its gardens and court-yards.

If, instead of being the dwelling of a private individual, it had been that of a mandarin, a great drum would have occupied the best place, under the carved roof of the porch over the door, and where, in the night as well as in the day, those of his officers who might have to ask for justice would have knocked. But, instead of this "complainers' drum," huge porcelain jars ornamented the entrance of the yamen, and contained cold tea, which was constantly renewed by attendants.

These jars were at the disposal of passers-by, a generosity which did honor to Kin-Fo. So he was thought a great deal of, as they say, "by his neighbors in the East and West."

On the master's arrival, the servants ran to the door to meet him. *Valets-de-chambre,* footmen, porters, chair-bearers, grooms, coachmen, waiters, night-watchers, and cooks, and all who compose the Chinese household, formed into line under the orders of the intendant; while a dozen coolies, engaged by the month for the heaviest work, stood a little in the rear.

The intendant offered his welcome to the master of the house, who made a slight acknowledgment with a motion of his hand, and passed rapidly on.

"Soun?" said he simply.

"Soun!" answered Wang, smiling. "If Soun were here, it would not be Soun!"

"Where is he?" repeated Kin-Fo.

The intendant had to confess that neither he nor any one knew what had become of him. Now, Soun held no less important a position than that of first *valet-de-chambre,* and was in particular attached to Kin-Fo's person, and was one whom the latter could by no means do without.

Was he, then, a model servant? No: he could not possibly have performed his duties in a worse manner. Absent-minded, incoherent in speech, awkward with his hands and tongue, a thorough *gourmand,* and somewhat of a coward, he was a true Chinese-screen Chinaman, but faithful on

the whole, and the only person, after all, who possessed the gift of moving his master. Kin-Fo found an occasion to get angry with Soun twenty times a day; and, if he only corrected him ten, there was just so much the less to rouse him from his habitual indifference, and stir his bile. A hygienic servant, it is plain to be seen.

Besides, Soun, like the majority of Chinese servants, came of his own accord to receive punishment whenever he merited it, which his master was not sparing in bestowing. The blows of the rattan rained down on his shoulders, but he hardly minded them. What caused him to show infinitely more sensibility was the successive cuttings of his braided pigtail, which Kin-Fo made him undergo when he was guilty of any grave fault.

Probably no one is unaware how much the Chinaman values this odd appendage. The loss of his pigtail is the first punishment offered to a criminal. It is a dishonor for life: therefore the unhappy valet dreaded nothing so much as to be condemned to lose a piece of it. Four years before, when he entered Kin-Fo's service, his braid, one of the most beautiful in the Celestial Empire, measured one metre and twenty-five. Now there remained only fifty-seven centimetres.

At this rate, Soun in two years would be entirely bald.

However, Wang and Kin-Fo, followed respectfully by the servants, crossed the garden, in which the trees, that were mostly set in porcelain vases,

and trimmed in an astonishing but lamentable style of art, assumed the form of fantastic animals. Then the friends walked around the reservoir filled with "gouramis" and red fishes, and in which the limpid water was hidden from view under the broad, pale-red flowers of the "nelumbo," the most beautiful of the native water-lilies in the Empire of Flowers. They saluted a quadruped in hieroglyphics, painted in violent colors on a wall *ad hoc*, like a symbolical fresco, and finally reached the entrance to the principal dwelling in the yamen.

It was a house composed of a ground-floor and one story, raised on a terrace which was ascended by six marble steps. Bamboo screens were hung like awnings before the doors and windows, in order to render endurable the excessive heat by airing the interior. The flat roof contrasted with the fantastic roofing of the pavilions, scattered here and there in the enclosure of the yamen, whose embrasures, many-colored tiles, and bricks carved in fine arabesques, were extremely pleasing to the eye.

Inside, with the exception of the rooms especially reserved for the occupancy of Wang and Kin-Fo, there were only *salons* surrounded by cabinets formed of transparent walls, on which were traced garlands of painted flowers, or inscriptions giving those moral aphorisms with which the Celestials are profuse. Everywhere were to be seen seats oddly fashioned in pottery or porcelain,

in wood or marble, to say nothing of some dozens of cushions of more inviting softness; and everywhere were lamps or lanterns of various forms, with glasses shaded in delicate colors, and more encumbered with tassels, fringes, and top-knots than a Spanish mule; and the little tea-tables called teha-ki, which form an indispensable complement to the furniture of a Chinese apartment. One would not have wasted, but have well employed, hours in counting the ivory and shell carvings, the dead bronzes, the censers, the lacquer-work ornamented with filagree of raised gold, them ilky-white and emerald-green objects in jade, the vases (round or in the form of a prism) of the dynasty of the Ming and Tsing, and the still rarer porcelains of the dynasty of the Yen in veined enamel-work of translucent pink and yellow, the secret of whose manufacture is unknown. All that Chinese fancy, added to European comfort, could offer, was to be found in this luxurious home.

Indeed, Kin-Fo — it has been alluded to before, and his tastes prove it — was a progressive man, who was not opposed to the importation of each and every modern invention; and he might be classed with those Sons of Heaven, still too rare, who are charmed by the physical and chemical sciences. He was not one of those barbarians who cut the first telegraph-wires which the house of Reynolds, wished to establish as far as Wousung with the intention of learning sooner of the arrival of English and American mails; nor one of those

behind-the-times mandarins, who, in order not to allow the submarine cable from Shang-hai to Hong-Kong to be secured at any point whatsoever of the territory, obliged the telegraph-workers to fasten it on a boat floating in the middle of the river.

No : Kin-Fo joined those of his compatriots who approved of the government building arsenals and ship-yards in Fou-Chao under the direction of French engineers ; and he was also a stockholder in the Chinese steamers which ply between Tien-sing and Shang-hai on government business, and was interested in those boats of great speed, which, after leaving Singapore, gain three or four days over the English mail.

It has been affirmed that material progress found its way even into his home. Indeed, the telephone gave communication between the different buildings in his yamen ; and electric bells connected the rooms in his house. During the cold season he built a fire to warm himself without a feeling of shame, being more sensible in this respect than his fellow-citizens, who froze before an empty fireplace under four or five suits of clothes. He lighted his house with gas, like the inspector-general of the custom-house in Pekin, and the immensely rich Mr. Yang, the principal proprietor of the pawn-shops in the Central Empire. Finally, disdaining the superannuated custom of hand-writing in his familiar correspondence, the progressive Kin-Fo, as one will soon find, adopted phonography, recently brought to the highest degree of perfection by Edison.

Thus the pupil of the philosopher Wang had, in his material as well as in his moral life, all that was necessary to make him happy; yet he was not so! He had Soun to rouse him from his daily apathy; but even Soun did not suffice to bring happiness.

It is true, that, at the present moment at least, Soun, who was never where he ought to be, would not show himself. He, no doubt, must have some grave fault with which to reproach himself, some awkward act done in his master's absence; or if he did not fear for his shoulders, accustomed to the domestic rattan, every thing led one to believe that he was trembling particularly for his pigtail.

"Soun!" called Kin-Fo, as he entered the hall into which opened the *salons* on the right and left; and his voice indicated an ill-repressed impatience.

"Soun!" repeated Wang, whose good advice and reproofs had produced no effect on the incorrigible valet.

"Let some one hunt up Soun, and bring him to me," said Kin-Fo, addressing the intendant, who set all his people to find the unfindable.

Wang and Kin-Fo remained alone.

"Wisdom," then spoke the philosopher, "commands the traveller who returns to his fireside to take rest."

"Let us be wise," simply answered Wang's pupil; and, after having clasped the philosopher's hand, he went to his apartments. Kin-Fo, when at length alone, stretched himself on one of those

soft lounges of European manufacture which a Chinese upholsterer would never have been able to make so comfortable.

In this position he began to meditate. Was he meditating on his marriage with the amiable and pretty woman he was to make the companion of his life? Yes; but that is not surprising, because he was about to visit her. This charming person did not reside in Shang-hai, but in Pekin; and Kin-Fo thought that it would be proper to announce to her both his return to Shang-hai, and his intention of soon visiting the capital of the Celestial Empire. Even were he to show a certain desire and slight impatience to see her again, it would not be out of place; for he really had a true affection for her.

Wang had demonstrated this to him by the most unanswerable rules of logic; and this new element introduced into his life might, perhaps, call forth the unknown, — that is, happiness, — who, — which, — of which —

Kin-Fo was dreaming, with his eyes already closed; and he would have gently fallen asleep, if he had not felt a sort of tickling in his right hand.

Instinctively his fingers came together, and seized a slightly knotty, cylindrical body, of tolerable thickness, which they undoubtedly were accustomed to handle. He could not be mistaken: it was a rattan, which had slipped into his right hand, while at the same time were heard, in a resigned tone, the following words: —

"When master wishes."

Kin-Fo started up, and instinctively brandished the correcting rattan.

Soun was before him, presenting his shoulders, and bending half double-in the position of a malefactor about to be beheaded. Supporting himself on the floor by one hand, he held a letter in the other.

"Well, here you are at last!" cried Kin-Fo.

"*Ai, ai, ya!*" answered Soun. "I did not expect master till the third period. If he wishes"—

Kin-Fo threw the rattan on the floor. Soun, although he was naturally so yellow, managed to turn pale.

"If you offer your back without any other explanation," said his master, "it is because you deserve something more. What is the matter?"

"This letter."

"Well, what of it? Speak!" cried Kin-Fo, seizing the letter which Soun presented to him.

"I very stupidly forgot to give it to you before your departure to Canton."

"A week behind time, you rascal!"

"I did wrong, master."

"Come here."

"I am like a poor crab that has no claws, and cannot walk. *Ai, ai, ya!*"

This last cry was one of despair. Kin-Fo, having seized Soun by his braid, with one clip of the well-sharpened scissors cut off the extreme tip.

It is to be supposed that claws grow instantane-

ously on the unhappy crab; for this one, having first snatched from the carpet the severed part of his precious appendage, scampered hastily away.

From fifty-seven centimetres, Soun's pigtail had become reduced to fifty-four.

Kin-Fo, who was again perfectly calm, had thrown himself once more on the lounge, and was examining, with the air of a man whom nothing hurries, the letter which had arrived a week ago. He was only displeased with Soun on account of his carelessness, not on account of the delay. How could any letter whatsoever interest him? It would only be welcome if it could cause him an emotion. An emotion for him! He looked at it, therefore, somewhat vacantly. The envelope, of heavy linen paper, revealed on the front and the reverse side various postmarks of a chocolate and a wine color, with the printed picture of a man underneath the figure 2, and "six cents," which showed that it came from the United States of America.

"Good!" said Kin-Fo, shrugging his shoulders, "a letter from my correspondent in San Francisco." And he threw it in a corner of the lounge.

Indeed, what could his correspondent have to tell him? That the securities which composed almost all his fortune remained quietly in the safes of the Central Bank in California, or that his stock had risen from fifteen to twenty per cent, or that the dividends to be distributed would exceed those of the preceding year, &c.

A few million dollars more or less really could not move him.

However, a few moments later, Kin-Fo took the letter again, and mechanically tore the envelope; but, instead of reading it, his eyes at first sought only the signature.

"It is truly from my correspondent," he said. "He can only have business-matters to tell me of; and business I won't think of till to-morrow."

And a second time Kin-Fo was about to throw down the letter, when inside, on the right-hand page, a word underlined several times caught his eye. It was the word "indebtedness," to which the San Francisco correspondent wished to draw the attention of his client at Shang-hai.

Kin-Fo then began the letter from the beginning, and read every word from the first to the last line, not without a certain feeling of curiosity rather surprising on his part. For a moment his eyebrows contracted; but a rather disdainful smile played round his lips when he finished reading.

He then rose, took about twenty steps around his room, and approached the rubber tube which placed him in communication with Wang. He even carried the mouth-piece to his lips, and was about to whistle through it, when he changed his mind, let fall the rubber serpent, and, returning, threw himself on the lounge.

"Pooh!" said he.

This word just expressed Kin-Fo.

"And she!" he murmured. "She is really more interested in all this than I am."

He then approached a little lacquered table, on

which stood an oblong box of rare carving; but, as he was about to open it, he stayed his hand.

"What was it that her last letter said?" he murmured.

Instead of raising the box-cover, he pressed a spring at one end, and immediately a sweet voice was heard: —

"My little elder brother, am I no longer to you like the flower mei-houa in the first moon, like the flower of the apricot in the second, and the flower of the peach-tree in the third? My dear, precious jewel of a heart, a thousand, ten thousand greetings to you!"

It was the voice of a young woman, whose tender words were repeated by the phonograph.

"Poor little younger sister!" said Kin-Fo.

Then, opening the box, he took out from the apparatus the paper on which were the indented lines which had just reproduced the inflections of the absent voice, and replaced it with another.

The phonograph was then perfected to such a degree, that it was necessary only to speak aloud for the membrane to receive the impression, and the wheel, which was turned as by the machinery of a watch, would stamp the words on the paper inside.

Kin-Fo spoke in it for about a moment.

By his voice, which was always calm and even, one could not have learned whether joy or sorrow influenced his thoughts.

No more than three or four sentences were

spoken. Having ended, he stopped the machinery of the phonograph, drew out the special paper on which the needle, acted upon by the membrane, had traced oblique ridges corresponding to the words spoken; then, placing this paper in an envelope which he sealed, he wrote from right to left the following address:—

MADAME LE-OU,
CHA-COUA AVENUE,
PEKIN.

An electric bell quickly brought the servant who had charge of letters, and he was ordered to take this one immediately to the post-office.

An hour afterwards Kin-Fo was sleeping peacefully, pressing in his arms his "tchou-fou-jen,"—a kind of pillow of plaited bamboo, which maintains a medium temperature in Chinese beds, and is very much prized in these warm latitudes.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH LE-OU RECEIVES A LETTER WHICH SHE WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE RECEIVED.

"You have no letter for me yet?"

"Eh! No, madam."

"Time seems so long to me, old mother!"

Thus for the tenth time that day spoke the charming Le-ou in the boudoir of her house in Cha-Coua Avenue, Pekin. The "old mother" who answered her, and to whom she gave this title, usually bestowed in China on servants of a respectable age, was the grumbling and disagreeable Miss Nan.

Le-ou had married at eighteen a literary man of the highest distinction, who had contributed to the famous "Tse-Khou-Tsuane-Chou."[1] This *savant* was twice her age, and died three years after this unequal union.

The young widow was left alone in the world when she was only twenty-one years old. Kin-Fo met her on a journey which he made to Pekin about this time. Wang, who was acquainted with

[1] This work, begun in 1773, is to comprise one hundred and sixty thousand volumes, and at present has reached only the seventy-eight thousand seven hundred and thirty-eighth.

this charming person, called the attention of his indifferent pupil to her; and Kin-Fo gradually gave himself up to the idea of modifying the conditions of his life by becoming the husband of such a pretty widow. Le-ou was not averse to the proposition: so the marriage, which was decided upon to the great satisfaction of the philosopher, was to be celebrated as soon as Kin-Fo, after having made the necessary arrangements at Shang-hai, should return to Pekin.

It is not common in the Celestial Empire for widows to marry again, — not that they do not wish to as much as those of their class in Western countries, but because their wish is shared by few of the opposite sex. If Kin-Fo was an exception to the rule, it was because he was eccentric, as we know. Le-ou, if married again, it is true, would no longer have the right to pass under the commemorative arches, which the emperor has sometimes erected in honor of women celebrated for their fidelity to a deceased husband, — such as that in honor of the widow Soung, who never would leave her husband's tomb; of the widow Koung-Kiang, who cut off an arm; and of the widow Yen-Tchiang, who disfigured herself as a sign of conjugal grief. But Le-ou thought she could do better in her twentieth year. She would resume that life of obedience which constitutes the whole *rôle* of woman in a Chinese family, give up talking of outside matters, conform to the precepts of the book "Li-nun" on domestic

virtues, and the book "Nei-tso-pien" on marital duties, and again find that consideration enjoyed by the wife who, in the upper classes, is not the slave she is generally believed to be. So Le-ou, who was intelligent and well educated, understanding what place she would hold in the life of the rich *ennuyé*, and feeling herself drawn towards him by the desire of proving to him that happiness exists on the earth, was quite resigned to her new fate.

The *savant* had left his young widow in easy, though moderate, circumstances; and the house in Cha-Coua Avenue was therefore unpretentious. The intolerable Nan was the only servant; but Le-ou was accustomed to her deplorable manners, which are not peculiar to the servants of the Empire of Flowers.

The young woman preferred to spend most of her time in her boudoir, the furniture of which would have seemed very plain, had it not been for the rich presents which, for two eventful months, had been arriving from Shang-hai. A few pictures hung on the walls; among others a *chef-d'œuvre* of the old painter[1] Huan-Tse-Nen,

[1] The renown of the great masters has been handed down to us by traditions, which, though anecdotical, are none the less worthy of attention. It is recorded, for example, that in the third century a painter, by the name of Tsao-Pouh-Ying, having finished a screen for the emperor, amused himself by painting flies here and there, and had the satisfaction of seeing his majesty take his handkerchief to brush them off. No less celebrated was Huan-Tse-Nen, who flourished towards the year one thousand. Having had charge of the mural decorations in one of the palace-halls, he painted several pheasants on it. Now, some foreign envoys who

which would have attracted the attention of connoisseurs among other very Chinese water-colors with green horses, violet dogs, and blue trees, the work of native modern artists. On a lacquer table were displayed fans, like great butterflies with expanded wings, from the celebrated school of Swatow. From a porcelain hanging-lamp drooped elegant festoons of those artificial flowers, so admirably manufactured from the pith of the *Arabia papyrifera* of Formosa, and rivalling the white water-lilies, yellow chrysanthemums, and red lilies of Japan, which crowded the *jardinières* of delicately carved wood. A soft light filled the room, as the screens of braided bamboo at the windows excluded the direct rays of the sun by filtering them, as it were. A magnificent screen, made of large sparrow-hawks' feathers, on which the spots of color, artistically disposed, represented a large peony, — that emblem of beauty in the Empire of Flowers, — two bird-cages in the form of a pagoda, real kaleidoscopes of the most brilliant birds of India, a few æolian "tiemaols," whose glass plate vibrated in the breeze, and a thousand objects, in fact, which recalled the absent one, completed the curious adornment of this boudoir.

brought several falcons as a present to the emperor, having been introduced into this hall, the birds of prey no sooner beheld the pheasants painted on the walls, than they flew upon them to the injury of their heads more than to the satisfaction of their voracious instincts. — THOMPSON'S *Voyage to China.*

"No letter yet, Nan?"

"Why no, madam, not yet!"

A charming woman was this young Le-ou, and pretty even to European eyes: for she was fair, not yellow, and had soft eyes, but slightly raised near the temples; black hair, which was ornamented with a few peach-blossoms, fastened by pins of green jade; small white teeth, and eyebrows faintly defined with a delicate line of India ink. She put no cosmetic of honey or Spanish white on her cheeks, as the beauties in the Celestial Empire generally do, no circle of carmine on her lower lip, no small vertical line between her eyes, nor a single layer of the paint which the imperial court dispenses annually for ten million sapeques. The young widow had nothing to do with these artificial ingredients. She seldom went out of her house at Cha-Coua, and for that reason could scorn this mask which every Chinese woman uses outside of her own house.

As for her toilet, nothing could be more simple and elegant. A long robe, slashed on four sides, with a wide embroidered galloon at the hem, and, underneath this, a plaited skirt; at her waist a plastron embellished with braid in gold filagree; pantaloons attached to the belt, and fastened over hose of Nankin silk; and pretty slippers ornamented with pearls, composed her attire. We can mention nothing more to make the young woman charming, unless we add that her hands

were delicate, and that she preserved her nails, which were long and rosy, in little silver cases, carved with exquisite art.

And her feet? Well, her feet were small, not in consequence of that barbarous custom of deforming them, which, happily, is being done away with, but because nature had made them so. This custom has already lasted seven hundred years, and probably arose from the deformity of some club-footed princess, and not, as has been believed, from the jealousy of husbands. In its most simple application, the flexion of the four toes under the sole, while leaving the calcaneum intact, converts the leg into a sort of conical trunk, absolutely impedes walking, and predisposes to anemia. The custom had extended day by day from the conquest by the Tartars; but now one cannot find three Chinese women out of ten who have been forced to submit at an early age to a succession of those painful operations which causes the deformity of the foot.

"It cannot be possible that a letter has not come to-day," said Le-ou again. "Go and see, old mother."

"I have been to see," answered Miss Nan very disrespectfully, as she left the room, grumbling.

Le-ou tried to work to divert her mind: yet she was thinking of Kin-Fo all the same; since she was embroidering for him a pair of cloth stockings, whose manufacture is confined to women in Chinese households, to whatever class they may belong. But

her work soon fell from her hands. She rose, took two or three watermelon-seeds from a bonbon-box, crunched them between her little teeth, then opened a book entitled "Nushun," — a code of instructions which it is the habit of every worthy wife to read daily.

"As spring is the most favorable season for the farmer, so is the dawn the most propitious moment of the day.

"Rise early, and do not yield to the wooing of sleep.

"Take care of the mulberry-tree and the hemp.

"Spin silk and cotton zealously.

"A woman's virtue is in being industrious and economical.

"Your neighbor will sing your praises."

This book was soon closed; for the fond Le-ou was not thinking of what she was reading.

"Where can he be?" she questioned. "He must have gone to Canton. Has he returned to Shang-hai? When will he arrive at Pekin? Has the sea been smooth for him? I pray the goddess Koanine may watch over him."

Thus spoke the anxious young woman; and her eyes wandered absently over a table-cover, which was artistically made of a thousand little pieces patched together in a sort of mosaic, and of a material of Portuguese fashion, on which were designed the mandarin duck and his family, the symbol of fidelity. Finally she approached a *jardinière*, and plucked a flower at random.

"Ah!" said she, "this is not a flower of the green willow, the emblem of spring, youth, and

joy: it is the yellow chrysanthemum, the emblem of autumn and sorrow!"

To dispel the anxiety which now possessed her, she took up her lute, and ran her fingers over the strings, while she softly sang the first words of the song, "Hands United;" but she could not continue.

"His letters always came promptly," she said to herself; "and what emotion they caused me as I read them! Or, instead of those lines which were addressed only to my eyes, it was his voice itself I could hear; for in that instrument it spoke to me as if he were near."

Le-ou glanced at a phonograph which stood on a small lacquered table, and which was exactly like the one that Kin-Fo used at Shang-hai. Both could thus hear each other speak, or rather the sound of their voices, in spite of the distance which separated them. But to-day, as for several days, the apparatus was silent, and no longer spoke the thoughts of the absent one.

The old mother now entered.

"Here is your letter," she said; and she handed Le-ou an envelope postmarked Shang-hai, and then left the room.

A smile played about Le-ou's lips, and her eyes sparkled with a more brilliant light. She quickly tore open the envelope, without taking time to look at it, as was her habit. It did not contain a letter, but one of those pieces of paper with oblique indented lines, which, when adjusted in the

phonograph, reproduce all the inflections of the human voice.

"Ah! I like this even better!" she cried joyously; "for I can hear him speak."

The paper was placed on the roller of the phonograph, which the machinery, like clock-work, immediately made revolve, and Le-ou, putting her ear to it, heard a well-known voice, which said, —

"Little younger sister, ruin has made way with my riches, as the east wind blows away the yellow leaves of autumn. I do not wish to make another wretched by having her share my poverty. Forget him on whom ten thousand misfortunes have fallen.

"Yours in despair,

"KIN-FO."

What a blow for the young woman! A life more bitter than the bitter gentian awaited her now. Yes, the golden wind was carrying away her last hopes with the fortune of him she loved. Was Kin-Fo's love for her gone forever? Did her friend believe only in the happiness which riches give? Ah, poor Le-ou! she now resembled a kite, which, when its string is broken, falls to the ground and is shattered.

Nan, whom she had called, entered the room, and, with a shrug of her shoulders, carried her mistress to her "hang." But, although her couch was one of those stove-beds artificially warmed, it seemed cold to the unfortunate Le-ou; and how slowly passed the five parts of that sleepless night!

CHAPTER VI.

WHICH WILL, PERHAPS, MAKE THE READER DESIRE TO VISIT THE OFFICES OF THE "CENTENARY."

THE next day Kin-Fo, whose disdain for things of this world did not lessen for a moment, left home alone, and, with his usual regular gait, descended the right shore of the creek. Having reached the wooden bridge which connects the English concession with the American, he crossed the river, and proceeded to a rather handsome house, which stood between the mission-church and the consulate of the United States.

On the front of this house was displayed a large copper plate, on which was engraved, in raised letters, this inscription, —

"THE CENTENARY LIFE-INSURANCE COMPANY.

Guaranteed Capital, $20,000,000.

Principal Agent, WILLIAM J. BIDULPH."

Kin-Fo pushed open the door, which was protected by another one inside, and found himself in an office divided into two compartments by a simple balustrade, as high as his elbow. Several pasteboard boxes for papers, some books with nickel

clasps, an American safe, two or three tables where the agent's clerks were working, and a complicated secretary reserved for the Honorable William J. Bidulph, comprised the furniture of this room, which seemed to belong more to a house in Broadway than to one on the shores of the Wousung.

William J. Bidulph was the principal agent in China of the life and fire insurance company whose head was in Chicago. It was called the *Centenary*, — a good title, which must draw patrons. The Centenary, which was very popular in the United States, had branches in the five divisions of the world. It carried on an enormous business, — thanks to its by-laws, which were very boldly and liberally framed, — and was thus able to take every risk.

The Celestials were beginning to follow these modern ideas which filled the coffers of companies of this kind. A large number of houses in the Central Empire were insured against fire; and the contracts of insurance in case of death, with their complex combinations, did not lack Chinese signatures. The advertisement of the Centenary was already posted on doors in Shanghai, and, among other places, on the pillars of Kin-Fo's costly yamen. Therefore it was not with the intention of insuring against fire that Wang's pupil was paying a visit to the Honorable William J. Bidulph.

"Mr. Bidulph?" he asked, as he entered.

William J. Bidulph was there "in person," like a photographer who is his own operator, and always at the disposition of the public. He was a man fifty years old, correctly dressed in a black coat and white cravat, with a full-grown beard, but no mustache, and with peculiarly American manners.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" he asked.

"To Mr. Kin-Fo of Shang-hai."

"Mr. Kin-Fo! one of the patrons of the Centenary, — policy number twenty-seven thousand two hundred."

"The same."

"Am I to have the good fortune of having you desire my services, sir?"

"I would like to speak to you in private," answered Kin-Fo.

Conversation between these two could be the more easily carried on, since William J. Bidulph spoke Chinese, and Kin-Fo spoke English.

The wealthy patron was then introduced, with the respect due him, into an inner office, hung with heavy tapestry, and closed with double doors, where one might have plotted the overthrow of the dynasty of Tsing without fear of being heard by the most cunning tipaos in the Celestial Empire.

"Sir," said Kin-Fo, as soon as he had seated himself in a rocking-chair before a fireplace heated by gas, "I desire to negotiate with your company

for the insurance of my life for a sum, the amount of which I will give you presently."

"Sir," answered William J. Bidulph, "there is nothing more simple. Two signatures — yours and mine — at the bottom of a policy, and the insurance is effected after a few preliminary formalities. But, sir, permit me to ask this question: you desire to die only at a very advanced age, do you not? — quite a natural desire."

"Why should I?" asked Kin-Fo. "Usually, when one insures his life, it indicates that he fears sudden death."

"O sir!" answered Mr. Bidulph in the most serious way in the world, "that fear is never entertained by the patrons of the Centenary. Does not its name indicate this? To insure with us is to take out a patent of long life. I beg pardon; but it is rare that those insuring with us do not live beyond the hundredth year, — very rare, very rare! For their own good, we ought to deprive them of life. But we do a superb business. So, I assure you, sir, that insurance in the Centenary is a *quasi* certainty of becoming a centenarian."

"Indeed!" said Kin-Fo quietly, looking at William J. Bidulph with his cold eye.

The chief agent, serious as a clergyman, had by no means the appearance of joking.

"However that may be," resumed Kin-Fo, "I desire to get insured for two hundred thousand dollars."

"We say a policy of two hundred thousand dollars," answered Mr. Bidulph.

He entered this sum in his note-book, and its magnitude did not even cause him to raise his eyebrows.

"You know," he added, "that the insurance is void, and that all premiums paid, whatever their number, go to the company, if the person insured loses his life through the act of the beneficiary of the contract."

"I know that."

"And against what risks do you pretend to insure, my dear sir?"

"All kinds."

"Risks of travel by land or sea, and those of a residence outside the limits of the Celestial Empire?"

"Yes."

"Risks of legal sentence?"

"Yes."

"Risks of duel?"

"Yes."

"Risks of military service?"

"Yes."

"Then the premiums will be very high."

"I will pay what is necessary."

"It is agreed."

"But," added Kin-Fo, "there is another very important risk, which you do not speak of."

"What is it?"

"Suicide. I thought the statutes of the Centenary authorized it to insure against suicide also."

"Just so, sir! just so!" answered William J. Bidulph, rubbing his hands. "Even that proves a source of splendid profit to us. You understand, our patrons are generally people who value life; and those who, through exaggerated prudence, insure against suicide, never kill themselves."

"For all that," answered Kin-Fo, "for personal reasons, I wish to insure against this risk also."

"Bless me! but it is a pretty big premium."

"I repeat that I will pay whatever is necessary."

"Of course we will put down, then," said Mr. Bidulph, continuing to write in his note-book, "risks of travelling by sea and land, and suicide."

"And on those conditions what will be the amount to pay?" asked Kin-Fo.

"My dear sir," answered the principal agent, "our premiums are tabled with a mathematical accuracy which is greatly to the honor of the company. They are not based, as they used to be, on Duvillars' tables. Are you acquainted with Duvillars?"

"I am not acquainted with Duvillars."

"A remarkable statistician, but already ancient, — so ancient, even, that he is dead. At the time that he established his famous tables, which still serve as the scale for premiums in the majority of European companies, which are very much behind the times, the average duration of life was less than now, thanks to general progress. We form a basis on a higher medium, and, con-

sequently, one more favorable to the insured, who pays a lower price, and lives longer."

"What will be the amount of my premium?" resumed Kin-Fo, desirous of stopping the wordy agent, who neglected no occasion to mention this advantage in favor of the Centenary.

"Sir," answered William J. Bidulph, "may I take the liberty of asking your age?"

"Thirty-one years."

"Well, at thirty-one, if you were only insuring on ordinary risks, you would pay in any company two eighty-three per cent; but in the Centenary it will only be two seventy, which, for a capital of two hundred thousand dollars, would make five thousand four hundred dollars per annum."

"And on the conditions that I desire?" asked Kin-Fo.

"Insuring against every risk, even suicide?"

"Suicide above every thing."

"Sir," answered Mr. Bidulph in an amiable tone, after having consulted a printed table on the last page of his note-book, "we cannot do this for you at less than twenty-five per cent."

"Which will make?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"And how will the premium be paid you?"

"All at once, or in parts monthly, at the pleasure of the person insured."

"And what would it be for the first two months?"

"Eight thousand three hundred and thirty-two

dollars, which, if paid to-day, the 30th of April, my dear sir, would cover you to the 30th of June of the present year."

"Sir," said Kin-Fo, "those conditions suit me. Here is the premium for the first two months." And he placed on the table a thick roll of bills, which he drew from his pocket.

"Well, sir, very well," answered Mr. Bidulph. "But, before signing the policy, there is one formality to be gone through with."

"What is it?"

"You must receive a visit from the physician of the company."

"For what reason?"

"In order to ascertain if you are soundly built, if you have no organic malady of a nature to shorten life, if, in short, you can give us guaranties of a long life."

"Of what use is that, since I insure even against duel and suicide?" observed Kin-Fo.

"Well, my dear sir," answered Mr. Bidulph, still smiling, "a malady whose germs you might have, and which would carry you off in a few months, would cost us in all two hundred thousand dollars."

"My suicide would cost you that also, I suppose."

"Dear sir," answered the gracious agent, taking Kin-Fo's hand, which he gently patted, "allow me to tell you that many of our patrons insure against suicide, but they never commit suicide. But we

are not prevented from watching over them,— but with the greatest discretion."

"Ah!" said Kin-Fo.

"I will add this, which I have often said, that, of all those insured by the Centenary, they are the ones who pay premiums the longest. But, between ourselves, pray tell me, why should the wealthy Mr. Kin-Fo commit suicide?"

"And why should the wealthy Mr. Kin-Fo get insured?"

"Oh!" answered William J. Bidulph, "to obtain the certainty of living to be very old as a patron of the Centenary."

There was no use in discussing any longer with the principal agent of the celebrated company, he was so positive in what he said.

"And now," he added, "to whose profit is this insurance of two hundred thousand dollars? Who will be the beneficiary of the contract?"

"There will be two beneficiaries," answered Kin-Fo.

"In equal shares?"

"No, in unequal shares. One for fifty thousand dollars, the other for one hundred and fifty thousand."

"For the fifty thousand, we say Mr. ——?"

"Wang."

"The philosopher Wang?"

"The same."

"And for the hundred and fifty thousand?"

"Madame Le-ou of Pekin."

"Pekin," added Mr. Bidulph, finishing his entry of the names of the beneficiaries. Then he resumed: —

"What is Madame Le-ou's age?"

"Twenty-one," answered Kin-Fo.

"Oh!" said the agent, "a young lady who will be quite old when she receives the amount of the policy."

"Why so, please?"

"Because you will live to be more than a hundred, my dear sir. And how old is the philosopher Wang?"

"Fifty-five."

"Well, this worthy man is sure of never receiving any thing."

"That remains to be seen, sir."

"Sir," answered Mr. Bidulph, "if at fifty-five I were the heir of a man of thirty-one, who was to die a centenarian, I would not be so simple as to count on inheriting from him."

"Your servant, sir," said Kin-Fo, moving to the office-door.

"And yours," answered the Honorable Mr. Bidulph, bowing to the new insuree of the Centenary.

The next day the physician of the company made Kin-Fo the regular visit.

"Body of iron, muscles of steel, lungs like organ-bellows," read the report. There was nothing to prevent the company from dealing with a man so soundly built. The policy was then signed under

this date by Kin-Fo, on his part, for the benefit of the young widow and the philosopher Wang; and, on the other, by William J. Bidulph, the representative of the company.

Neither Le-ou nor Wang, unless through improbable circumstances, would ever know what Kin-Fo had just done for them, until the day when the Centenary should be called upon to pay them the policy, the last generous act of the *ex-millionnaire.*

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH WOULD BE VERY SAD IF IT DID NOT TREAT OF WAYS AND CUSTOMS PECULIAR TO THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE.

WHATEVER the Honorable William J. Bidulph might think and say, the funds of the Centenary were very seriously threatened. Indeed, Kin-Fo's plan was not of that kind, which, on reflection, one postpones executing indefinitely. Being utterly ruined, Wang's pupil had thoroughly resolved to end an existence which even in the time of his prosperity brought him only sadness and *ennui.*

The letter which was not delivered for a week by Soun came from San Francisco, and gave notice of the suspension of payment of the Central Bank of California. Now, Kin-Fo's fortune consisted almost entirely, as we know, of stock in this celebrated bank, which had previously been so sound. But the situation was not to be doubted. Improbable as the news might seem, it was unhappily only too true. The suspension of the Central Bank had just been confirmed by journals received at Shang-hai. The failure had been declared, and Kin-Fo was wholly ruined.

Indeed, what remained to him outside of the stocks in this bank? Nothing, or almost nothing.

The sale of his house at Shang-hai, which it would be almost impossible to bring about, would give him a sum insufficient for an income. The eight thousand dollars premium paid into the Centenary, a small amount of stock in the Boat Company of Tien-sing, which, if sold that day, would furnish him with hardly enough to carry on things *in extremis*, now comprised his sole fortune.

A Western man, Frenchman or Englishman, would have taken this new state of things philosophically perhaps, and would have begun life over again, seeking to repair his fortunes by assiduous labor; but a Celestial would think and act quite differently. It was voluntary death that Kin-Fo, as a true Chinaman, without compunctions of conscience, and with that typical indifference which characterizes the yellow race, was meditating as a means of getting out of his troubles.

The Chinaman has only a passive courage, but this courage he possesses in the highest degree. His indifference to death is truly extraordinary. When he is ill, he sees it approach, and does not falter. When condemned, and already in the hands of an officer, he manifests no fear. The frequent public executions, the sight of the horrible torments which are part of the penal laws, in the Celestial Empire, have early familiarized the Sons of Heaven with the idea of renouncing the things of this world without regret.

Therefore one will not be astonished to find that in every family this thought of death is the order of the day, and the subject of many conversations, and has an influence over the most ordinary acts of life. The worship of ancestors is also observed by the poorest people. There is not a wealthy home where a sort of domestic sanctuary has not been set apart, and no hut so wretched but some corner has been kept for the relics of ancestors, in whose honor a day is celebrated in the second month. That is why one finds in the same store where are sold babies' cribs and wedding-gifts, a varied assortment of coffins, which form a staple article in Chinese trade.

The purchase of a coffin is, indeed, one of the constant occupations of the Celestials. The furniture of a house would be incomplete if a coffin were wanting ; and the son makes it a duty to offer one to his father in the latter's lifetime, which is a touching proof of tenderness. This coffin is placed in a special room. It is ornamented and taken care of, and generally, when it has received mortal remains, is kept with pious care for years. In short, respect for the dead is the foundation of Chinese religion, and tends to bind family ties more closely.

Kin-Fo, owing to his temperament, was considering, with more perfect tranquillity than another would have had, the thought of ending his days. He had insured the fate of the two beings to

whom his affections turned. Therefore what had he now to regret? Nothing. Suicide could not even cause him remorse. What is a crime in civilized countries of the West is only a lawful act, we might say, with this strange people of Eastern Asia.

Kin-Fo's decision was then made; and no influence could turn him from carrying out his project, not even that of the philosopher Wang.

But the latter was absolutely ignorant of his pupil's designs. Soun was no better acquainted with them, and had observed but one thing, that since his return Kin-Fo showed himself more tolerant of his daily stupidities.

Positively Soun was coming to the conclusion that he could not find a better master, and now his precious pigtail wriggled on his back in unwonted security.

A Chinese proverb says, —

"To be happy on earth, one must live at Canton, and die at Liao-Tcheou."

It is indeed true that at Canton one finds every luxury of life, and at Liao-Tcheou the best coffins are manufactured.

Kin-Fo did not fail to leave an order with the best house that his last bed of repose might arrive in time. To have a proper couch for the eternal sleep is the constant thought of every Celestial who knows how to live.

Kin-Fo at the same time bought a white cock,

whose part, as one knows, is to embody departing spirits, and seize in their flight one of the seven elements of which a Chinese soul is composed.

One sees that if the pupil of the philosopher Wang showed himself indifferent to the details of life, he was much less so to those of death.

That being done, he had only to arrange the programme for his funeral; and that very day a beautiful sheet of paper, called rice-paper, — in whose composition rice is entirely foreign, — received Kin-Fo's last will.

After having bequeathed his house in Shang-hai to the young widow, and a portrait of the Tai-ping chief to Wang, which the philosopher had always looked upon with pleasure, and having done this without injury to the policy of the Centenary, Kin-Fo traced with a firm hand the order of march of the persons who were to attend the obsequies.

First, in default of relations, of which he had none, a party of friends, which he had, were to appear at the head of the *cortége*, dressed in white, — the color of mourning in China.

Through the streets, as far out as the country about the old tomb, a double row of servants, charged with the burial, would file. They would bear different symbols, — blue parasols, halberds, sceptres, silk screens, written documents with the details of the ceremony, and be dressed in a black tunic with a white belt, and wear a black felt cap with red aigrettes on their heads. Behind the first group of friends would walk a guide dressed in

scarlet from head to foot, beating a gong, and preceding the portrait of the deceased, which would be lying in a sort of decorated shrine. Then a second group of friends would follow, whose part it is to faint at regular intervals on cushions prepared for the occasion. Finally, a last group of young men, screened under a blue and gold canopy, would strew the road with little pieces of white paper, pierced with a hole like sapeques, which were intended to lure away the evil spirits that might be tempted to join the funeral procession.

Then the catafalque would appear, an enormous palanquin hung in violet silk, and embroidered with gold dragons, which fifty valets would bear on their shoulders between a double row of bonzes. The priests, clad in robes of gray, red, or yellow, would follow, reciting prayers in the intervals between the thunder of gongs, the shrill tooting of flutes, and the noisy din of trumpets six feet long.

At last the mourners' carriages draped in white would bring up the rear of this gorgeous procession, the expenses of which must exhaust the last resources of the opulent corpse.

There was really nothing extraordinary in this programme. Many funerals of this class pass through the streets of Canton, Shang-hai, or Pekin; and the Celestials see in them only a natural homage rendered to the remains of him who is no more.

On the 20th of October a box, expressed from

Liao-Tcheou and addressed to Kin-Fo, reached his house at Shang-hai. It contained the coffin he had ordered, which was carefully packed. Neither Wang, nor Soun, nor any of the servants in the yamen, felt any cause for surprise; for, we repeat, there is not a Chinaman who does not long to possess in his lifetime the bed in which he will be laid to rest for eternity.

This coffin — a *chef-d'œuvre* from the manufactory of Liao-Tcheou — was placed in the "ancestors' chamber." There, after being brushed, waxed, and polished, it would usually, no doubt, have waited a long while for the day when the pupil of the philosopher Wang would have utilized it on his own account. It was not so ordained, however; for Kin-Fo's days were numbered, and the hour was near that would add him to the list of his family ancestors. Indeed, this was the very evening when he had determined to die.

A letter had arrived that day from the afflicted Le-ou, who offered him the little that she possessed. Fortune was nothing to her: she could do without it. She loved him; and what did he wish more? Could they not be happy in more modest circumstances? This letter, which expressed the most sincere affection, did not modify Kin-Fo's resolution.

"My death alone can enrich her," he thought.

It now remained to decide where and how this last act should be performed; and Kin-Fo experienced a sort of pleasure in planning the details,

for he hoped that at the last moment an emotion, however fleeting, would make his heart beat.

Within the enclosure of the yamen rose four pretty kiosks, ornamented in the fanciful manner characteristic of Chinese decorators. They bore significant names, — the Pavilion of Happiness, which Kin-Fo never entered; the Pavilion of Fortune, which he scorned; the Pavilion of Pleasure, whose gates had long been closed to him; and the Pavilion of Long Life, which he had resolved to destroy.

It was this last one that instinct led him to choose, and he resolved to shut himself up in it at nightfall; and it was there next day they would find him happy in death. This point being settled, in what manner should he die? Stab himself like a Japanese? strangle himself with a silken girdle like a mandarin? open his veins in a perfumed bath like an epicurean in ancient Rome? No: these methods would seem brutal, and painful to his friends and servants. One or two grains of opium mixed with a subtle poison would be sufficient to take him from this world to the next. While unconscious, perhaps, he would pass away in one of those dreams which convert slumber into eternal sleep.

The sun was already beginning to sink below the horizon, and Kin-Fo had only a few moments more to live. He wished to take a last walk, and see once more the country around Shang-hai, and the shores of the Houang-Pou, on which he

had so often walked away his *ennui.* Alone, without having even caught a glimpse of Wang that day, he left the yamen to return once more, and never leave it again.

He crossed the English territory, the little bridge over the creek, and the French concession, with an indolent step, which he did not care to hasten in this last hour. Passing along the wharf of the native port, he wound around the Shang-hai wall as far as the Roman-Catholic cathedral, whose cupola overlooks the southern portion of the country. Then he bore to the right, and quietly ascended the road to the pagoda at Loung-Hao.

Here was the vast flat country which extends to the shadowy heights which bound the valley of the Min. It was an immense swamp, which agricultural industry has converted into rice-fields. Here and there were a network of canals filled by the tide, and a few wretched villages in which the reed huts were cemented with yellowish mud; and two or three fields of wheat, banked up above reach of the water. The narrow paths were frequented by a large number of dogs and white goats, ducks and geese; and, whenever a pedestrian disturbed their sport, the former would scamper off on all fours, and the latter flap their wings and fly away.

This richly cultivated country, whose aspect could not astonish a native, would, however, have attracted the attention of a stranger, and perhaps repelled him; for everywhere were seen coffins by

the hundreds, to say nothing of the mounds whose turf covered the dead buried at last forever. One saw only piles of oblong boxes, and pyramids of biers in layers, like planks in a shipbuilder's yard; for the Chinese plain on the outskirts of the towns is only a vast cemetery, where the dead, as well as the living, encumber the ground. It is asserted that the burial of these coffins is forbidden so long as one dynasty occupies the throne of the Son of Heaven; and these dynasties last centuries. Whether the prohibition be true or not, it is a fact that corpses, lying in their coffins, — some of which are painted in bright colors, some sombre and modest, some new and smart looking, and others already falling to dust, — wait years for the day of burial.

Kin-Fo was by no means astonished at this state of affairs, and he walked on without looking around him; so that two strangers, dressed like Europeans, who had followed him from the time he left the yamen, did not even attract his attention. He did not see them, although they seemed desirous of not losing sight of him. They kept at some distance, following him, — walking when he walked, stopping when he stopped. At times these two men exchanged peculiar looks and a couple of words, and it was very evident that they were there to watch him. Of medium height, not over thirty, active, and well set, one would have called them two pointers with sharp eyes and fleet limbs.

Kin-Fo, after walking around the country for a

league, retraced his steps, in order to reach the shores of Houang-Pou.

The two blood-hounds immediately followed.

Kin-Fo, on his way home, met two or three beggars of the most forlorn aspect, and bestowed alms upon them.

A short distance beyond, several Christian Chinese women, trained to their charitable profession by the French Sisters of Charity, crossed the road. They were carrying home poor little waifs in a basket on their back. They have been appropriately called the "rag-pickers of children." And what are these unfortunate little ones but rags scattered in the gutter?

Kin-Fo emptied his purse into the hands of these sisters, who seemed rather surprised at this act on the part of a Celestial.

By the time he reached Shang-hai on his way home, and was returning by the way of the wharf, it was evening, and the floating population were still astir. Shouting and singing came to his ears from every side. He listened intently, eager to know what would be the last words to fall on his ear in this life.

A young Tankadere, guiding her sampan through the sombre waters of Houang-Pou, was singing the following ditty:—

"With bark in bright colors,
Embellished
With thousands of flowers,
In rapture I wait him
Who comes back to-morrow.

Sea-god, watch and guard him,
While he is returning,
And help him to hasten
To me!"

"He will return to-morrow; and I, where shall I be?" thought Kin-Fo, shaking his head.

The young Tankadere resumed:—

"He sailed far, far from me,
Perhaps to
The country of Mantchoux,
The great wall of China.
O heart! how thou tremblest
At thought of him braving
The storm!"

Kin-Fo still listened, but this time said nothing.

The singer concluded:—

"Why sailed he inviting
Disaster?
To die so without me?
Come! priest is awaiting
To join the same moment
Our emblems, the Phœnix!
Come, come! I so love thee,
And thou lovest me."

"Yes: perhaps riches are not every thing in this world," he murmured. "But life is not worth living."

Half an hour later he entered his house. The two strangers, who had followed him till then, were obliged to stop.

Kin-Fo quietly proceeded to the kiosk of Long

Life, opened the door, closed it again, and found himself alone in a little *salon*, lighted by a lantern of ground glass, which shed a soft glow around.

On a table, which was made of a single piece of jade, stood a box containing a few grains of opium, mixed with a deadly poison, — a "have ready" which the wealthy *ennuyé* kept always on hand.

Kin-Fo took up two of these grains, put them in one of those red-clay pipes which opium-smokers are in the habit of using, and began to light it.

"Why, how is this?" said he. "Not even an emotion in this moment when I am about to fall asleep never to wake again!"

He hesitated a moment.

"No!" he cried, throwing down his pipe on the floor, which broke it in pieces. "That supreme emotion I must have, even if it be but an attempt. I must have it, and I will have it."

And, leaving the kiosk, he proceeded to Wang's room, walking faster than usual.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH KIN-FO MAKES A SERIOUS PROPOSITION TO WANG, WHICH THE LATTER NO LESS SERIOUSLY ACCEPTS.

THE philosopher had not yet retired, but was lying on the lounge reading the latest edition of "The Pekin Gazette;" and the contraction of his eyebrows was a certain indication that the paper was paying a compliment to the reigning dynasty of Tsing.

Kin-Fo pushed open his door, entered the room, threw himself on an arm-chair, and, without other preamble, said, —

"Wang, I have come to ask you to do me a service."

"Ten thousand services," answered the philosopher, letting fall the paper. "Speak, speak, my son! speak without fear; and, whatever they may be, I will render them."

"The service I require," said Kin-Fo, "is one of that kind that a friend can render but once; and when it is done, Wang, I will excuse you from the nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine others. And I must add that you must not even expect a return of thanks on my part."

"The most skilful unraveller of the inexplicable could not understand you. What is it all about?"

"Wang," said Kin-Fo, "I am ruined."

"Ah, ah!" said the philosopher, with the tone of one who hears good rather than bad news.

"The letter that I found here on our return from Canton," resumed Kin-Fo, "informed me that the Central Bank in California had failed. With the exception of the yamen and a million dollars, which would enable me to exist a month or two longer, I have nothing left."

"Then," said Wang, after a good look at his pupil, "it is no longer the rich Kin-Fo who speaks to me?"

"It is the poor Kin-Fo, whom poverty by no means frightens."

"Well answered, my son," said the philosopher, rising. "I have not lost my time and pains in teaching you wisdom. The future has changed. Heretofore you have only vegetated, without tastes, passions, or struggles. You are going to live now. Confucius said, 'What matters it that the future has changed? There always come fewer misfortunes than one fears.' And the Talmud repeated his words. We shall earn our daily rice. The 'Nun-Schum' teaches us that, 'In life there are ups and downs. The wheel of fortune turns perpetually, and the spring wind is variable. Rich or poor, try to do your duty.' Let us leave."

And Wang in earnest, like a practical philosopher, was about to leave the sumptuous house; but Kin-Fo detained him.

"I said a moment ago," he resumed, "that poverty did not frighten me; and I now add that it is because I have resolved not to endure it."

"Ah!" said Wang, "you wish then"—

"To die!"

"To die!" answered the philosopher quietly. "The man who has resolved to end his life says nothing about it to any one."

"It would have been done already," resumed Kin-Fo, with a calmness equal to that of the philosopher, "if I had not wished that my death should cause at least my first and last emotion. Now, as I was about to swallow one of those grains of opium that you know about, my heart beat with so little emotion that I threw away the poison, and came to find you."

"Do you then wish, my friend, that we should die together?" answered Wang, smiling.

"No," said Kin-Fo: "I wish you to live."

"Why?"

"To kill me with your own hand."

At this unexpected proposition, Wang did not even shudder. But Kin-Fo, who looked steadily into his face, saw a gleam in his eyes. Was the old Tai-ping awakening? Did he feel no hesitation at this charge which his pupil was about to lay on him? Could eighteen years, then, have passed over his head without stifling the sanguinary instincts of his youth? He did not even make an objection to doing this to the son of the man who had been charitable to him. He would

agree, without flinching, to deliver him from the existence he no longer desired. He would do this, he, Wang the philosopher.

But this peculiar light almost immediately died out of his eyes; and his face, though rather more serious, now looked like that of a worthy man as usual.

"Is that the service you ask of me?" he said, resuming his seat.

"Yes," answered Kin-Fo; "and this service will acquit you of all you may imagine you owe Tchoung-Heou and his son."

"What do you require of me?" simply asked the philosopher.

"On the 25th of June,—the twenty-eighth day of the sixth moon, you understand, Wang,—the day which will complete my thirty-first year,—I shall have ceased to live. I must fall by your hand; and the blow may be given in my face or in my back, in the daytime or night,—no matter where, no matter how,—standing or sitting, sleeping or awake,—and I be sent to my rest by shot or poison. In each of the eighty thousand minutes which will remain to me of life for fifty-five days yet, I must be filled with the thought, and I hope with the fear, that my life is to suddenly end. I must have before me those eighty thousand emotions, so that, when the seven elements of my soul separate, I can cry out, 'At last I have lived!'"

Kin-Fo, contrary to his habit, had spoken with decided animation; and it will also be observed

that he had appointed as the extreme limit of his existence the sixth day before the expiration of his policy. This was acting like a prudent man; for, in default of payment of a new premium, a delay would cause his heirs to lose the insurance.

The philosopher listened gravely, casting a quick, stealthy look at the portrait of the Tai-ping chief which ornamented his room, — a portrait which was to fall to him, though he was not aware of it.

"You will not shrink from the obligation you will take upon yourself of killing me?" asked Kin-Fo.

Wang, with a gesture, asserted that he had not yet become so feeble-hearted: he had seen too much when fighting under the banners of the Tai-ping. "But," he added, wishing to exhaust every objection before pledging himself, "do you wish to renounce the chances that the. True Master has accorded you to reach extreme old age?"

"I renounce them."

"Without regret?"

"Without regret," replied Kin-Fo. "Live to be old! To resemble some piece of wood which can no longer be carved! No, indeed! Nor do I desire to be rich, and still less to be poor."

"And the young widow at Pekin?" asked Wang. "Do you forget the saying, 'Flowers with flowers, and the willow with the willow: the union of two hearts makes a hundred years of spring'?"

"Against three hundred years of autumn, sum-

mer, and winter," replied Kin-Fo, shrugging his shoulders. "No: if Le-ou were poor, she would be wretched with me; but now my death will insure her a fortune."

"Have you done that?"

"Yes. And you, Wang, have fifty thousand dollars placed on my head."

"Ah!" said the philosopher quietly, "you have an answer for every question."

"For every thing, even to an objection that you have not yet made."

"What is it?"

"Why, the danger that you may incur after my death of being pursued as an assassin."

"Oh!" said Wang, "they are only blunderers or rogues who let themselves be caught. Besides, what merit would there be in rendering you this last service if I risked nothing?"

"None at all, Wang. I prefer to give you every security as to that, and no one will think of disturbing you."

And, saying this, Kin-Fo approached a table, took up a sheet of paper, and, in a clear, plain hand, wrote the following lines:—

"I have voluntarily taken my own life, through disgust and weariness of life."

Then he gave the paper to Wang.

The philosopher read it in a low voice at first, then aloud, after which he folded it carefully, and put it in a memorandum-book which he always carried about him.

Another gleam came into his eyes.

"Is all this serious on your part?" he asked, looking fixedly at his pupil.

"Very serious."

"It will be none the less so on mine."

"I have your word?"

"You have."

"Then before the 25th of June, at the latest, I shall have lived?"

"I do not know if you will have lived in the sense you mean," answered the philosopher gravely; "but you will surely be dead."

"Thank you, and farewell, Wang!"

"Farewell, Kin-Fo!"

Thereupon Kin-Fo quietly left the philosopher's room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONCLUSION OF WHICH, HOWEVER SINGULAR IT MAY BE, PERHAPS WILL NOT SURPRISE THE READER.

"WELL, Craig-Fry?" said the Honorable Mr. Bidulph, the next day, to the two agents whom he had appointed to watch over the new patron of the Centenary.

"Well," answered Craig, "we followed him yesterday during a long walk which he took in the country around Shang-hai" —

"And he certainly did not appear like a man who is thinking of killing himself," added Fry.

"And, when night came, we escorted him as far as his door" —

"Which, unfortunately, we could not enter."

"And this morning?" asked Mr. Bidulph.

"We have heard," answered Craig, "that he was" —

"As safe and sound as the Palikao bridge," added Fry.

The agents Craig and Fry — two unmistakable Americans, two cousins in the employ of the Centenary — were absolutely only one being in two persons, who could not possibly be more thoroughly

identified with each other. In fact, they were so identified, that the latter invariably finished the sentences that the former began, and *vice versa.* They had the same brain, thoughts, heart, and stomach, and the same manner of doing every thing; and had four hands, arms, and legs, united in one body as it were. In a word, they were Siamese twins, whose connecting ligament must have been severed by an audacious surgeon.

"Then you have not been able to enter the house yet," said Mr. Bidulph.

"Not" — said Craig.

"Yet," said Fry.

"It will be difficult; but it must be done," answered the principal agent: "for it is important for the Centenary to gain not only an enormous premium, but also to save two hundred thousand dollars. Therefore you will watch over our new patron two months, and perhaps longer if he renews his policy."

"There is a servant" — said Craig.

"Whom we could use perhaps," said Fry.

"And learn all that goes on" — continued Craig.

"In the house at Shang-hai," concluded Fry.

"Humph!" said Mr. Bidulph. "Pull wool over his eyes; lay a trap for him; buy him. He will be moved by the sound of taels, and taels you shall have in plenty. Even if you have to exhaust the three thousand polite formulas which comprise Chinese etiquette, why do so, and you will have no cause to regret your trouble."

"It shall be" — began Craig.

"Done," answered Fry.

For such potent reasons Craig and Fry tried to get on familiar terms with Soun. Now, Soun was a man who could no more resist being enticed by taels than by the courteous offer of several glasses of American liquor.

Craig-Fry then learned through Soun all that it was for their interest to know, the sum and substance of which is as follows: —

Had Kin-Fo changed his manner of living in any way whatever?

No: unless, perhaps, he scolded his faithful valet less, and gave the scissors a holiday to the advantage of the poor fellow's pigtail, and seldom tickled his shoulders with the rattan.

Had Kin-Fo any deadly weapon about him?

No; for he did not belong to the respectable list of amateurs in the use of murderous instruments.

What did he eat at his meals?

A few simple dishes, which did not at all resemble the fantastic cooking of the Celestials.

At what hour did he rise?

At the fifth period, at cock's crow, when the horizon was lighted by the first glimmer of dawn.

Did he retire early?

At the second period, as was always his habit since Soun had been acquainted with him.

Did he seem sad, absent-minded, bored, and wearied with life?

He was not positively a cheerful man, oh, no! Yet for several days he seemed to take more interest in the things of this world. Yes, Soun thought him less indifferent, like a man who might be expecting — what? He could not tell.

Finally, did his master possess any poisonous substance which he might make use of?

He could not have any; for that very morning, by his orders, they had thrown into the Houang-Pou a dozen little globules which must possess some dangerous quality.

In truth, there was nothing in all this of a nature to alarm the principal agent of the Centenary. Not at all; for never had the wealthy Kin-Fo, — whose circumstances no one except Wang was aware of — appeared to enjoy life better.

However this may be, Craig and Fry were obliged to continue to inform themselves about all that their patron did, and to follow him in his walks; for it was possible that he might make an attempt on his life away from home.

Thus did the two inseparables; and thus did Soun continue to talk with the more *abandon*, because the latter had much to gain in a conversation with such amiable men.

It would be going too far to say that the hero of this story valued life more since he had resolved to rid himself of it. But, as he expected, — in the first days at least, — he did not want for emotions. He placed Damocles' sword directly over his head, and this sword would fall on it some day. Would

it be to-day or to-morrow? this morning, or this evening? On this point there was some doubt; and hence a beating of the heart, which was a new sensation for him.

Besides, since he and Wang had given their mutual word, they had seen each other but seldom.

The philosopher either left the house more frequently than usual, or he remained shut up in his room. Kin-Fo did not go there to see him, — for that was not his *rôle*, — and was not even aware how Wang passed his time. Perhaps in preparing a trap for him. A former Tai-ping must have many means with which to despatch a man. Kin-Fo's curiosity was roused in regard to this, and thus a new element of interest was afforded him. However, master and pupil met almost every day at the same table; and, of course, no allusion was made to their future position of assassin and assassinated. They talked of one thing and another, but not much about any thing. Wang, who was more serious than usual, turned away his eyes, which his spectacles but partially concealed, but did not succeed in disguising a constant abstraction. He who was so good-natured and naturally communicative had become taciturn and sad. A great eater formerly, like every philosopher who is blessed with a sound stomach, he could not now be tempted by delicate dishes, and the Chigne wine no longer brought him bright dreams. But Kin-Fo tried in every way to put him at his ease.

He tasted every dish first, and would let nothing be removed from table without trying it. Hence it followed that he ate more than usual; his blunted palate again experienced sensations; and he relished his dinner, which agreed with him remarkably. It was certain that poison could not be the means chosen by the rebel chieftain's old slaughterer, but his intended victim would try every thing.

Besides, every facility was afforded Wang to accomplish his deed. The door of Kin-Fo's chamber was always left open; and the philosopher could enter it day or night, and deal the fatal blow, whether his pupil was awake or asleep. All that Kin-Fo asked was, that his hand should be swift, and strike him to the heart.

But his emotions were wearing off; and, after the first few nights, he was so accustomed to expect his death-blow, that he slept the sleep of the just, and awoke every morning fresh and bright. Things could not continue thus.

Then the thought occurred to him, that perhaps it was repugnant to Wang to kill him in this house where he had been so hospitably received, and he resolved to put him still more at his ease. That was why he was running about the country, seeking isolated roads, and tarrying till the fourth period in the worst neighborhoods in Shang-hai, which were the regular resort of cut-throats who committed daily murders in perfect security. He wandered through the dark, narrow streets during

the late hours of the night, jostled by drunkards of every nationality, and heard the biscuit-vender shouting his "Mantoo! mantoo!" while ringing his bell to warn belated smokers. He did not reach his house till daybreak, but returned alive safe and sound without having perceived the inseparable Craig and Fry, who followed him continually, ready to come to his aid.

If matters continued thus, Kin-Fo would finally become accustomed to this new life, and *ennui* would not fail to gain the ascendency again.

How many hours had already passed without his being able to realize that he was condemned to death!

However, one day, the 12th of May, chance brought him an emotion. As he softly entered the philosopher's room, he saw him trying the sharp point of a dagger with the end of his finger, and moistening it afterwards in a very suspicious-looking blue glass bottle.

Wang did not hear his pupil enter; and, seizing the dagger, he brandished it around several times, as if to assure himself that he had not forgotten how to handle it. Truly, his face was enough to frighten one; for the blood had mounted to his very eyes, which seemed to glare ferociously.

"He will do it to-day," said Kin-Fo.

And he discreetly withdrew, without having been seen or heard, and did not leave his room again that day. The philosopher, however, did not make his appearance. Kin-Fo went to bed as

usual, and the next day rose as full of life as a healthy man does; and so emotions were wasted on him. This was provoking, and ten days had already passed; though, to be sure, Wang had two months still in which to perform his deed.

"He is certainly an idler," said Kin-Fo. "I have given him twice as much time as is necessary."

And he also feared the former Tai-ping had become effeminate amid the luxury at Shanghai.

From this day, however, Wang seemed to become more anxious and agitated, and went to and fro in the yamen like a man who cannot stay in one place. Kin-Fo even observed that he made repeated visits to the ancestors' room, where stood the precious coffin which had come from Loo-Choo. He was delighted to learn from Soun that Wang had ordered him to brush, clean, and dust the article in question; in a word, to keep it in readiness.

"How comfortably master will rest in it!" added the faithful servant. "It is enough to make you wish to try it."

A remark by which Soun obtained a kindly recognition.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th of May passed.

There was nothing new.

Did Wang, then, intend to let pass the intervening time, and pay his debt only at the moment when due, as is customary with merchants? But

in that case there would be no more surprises, and consequently no more emotion for Kin-Fo.

Something of great significance, however, was imparted to him on the morning of the 15th of May, near the "mao-che;" that is, towards six o'clock in the morning.

He had a poor night, and, on waking, was still haunted by a dreadful dream. Prince Ien, the sovereign judge of the Chinese hell, had condemned him not to appear before him till the twelve hundredth moon should rise above the horizon of the Celestial empire. A century still to live,—a whole century!

Kin-Fo was now in a very bad humor, for it seemed as if every thing was conspiring against him. This is the way that he received Soun, when the latter as usual came to assist him in his morning toilet.

"Go to the devil! Go, receive ten thousand kicks for your wages, animal!"

"Why, master"—

"Go, I tell you!"

"No, no!" replied Soun, "at least, not till I have told you"—

"What?"

"That Mr. Wang"—

"Wang! what has Wang done?" said Kin-Fo eagerly, seizing Soun by his braid. "What has he done?"

"Master," answered Soun, wriggling like a

worm, "he ordered us to carry your coffin to the Pavilion of Long Life, and" —

"He did that!" cried Kin-Fo, whose brow lighted up. "Go, Soun! go, my friend! Stop! here are ten taels for you, and be sure that Wang's orders are executed in every particular."

Thereupon Soun, thoroughly amazed, left the room, saying to himself, —

"Really, master is crazy; but this time he is good-naturedly so."

Kin-Fo was now no longer in doubt: the Tai-ping meant to kill him in the Pavilion of Long Life, where he himself had determined to die. It was as if he were appointing a rendezvous for him there, and he would not fail to be present. The catastrophe was imminent.

How long the day seemed to Kin-Fo! The water in the clocks no longer flowed with its wonted speed, and the hands seemed to creep over their dial of jade.

Finally the first period drew nigh, and the sun disappeared below the horizon, and the shadows of night gradually enveloped the yamen.

Kin-Fo proceeded to the pavilion, which he expected never to leave alive, and lay down on a soft lounge, which seemed to be made for long repose, and waited.

Then the memories of his useless existence passed through his mind, — his *ennui*, his disgust, all that wealth had not been able to conquer, and all that poverty might have increased.

There was only one bright thing in his life, which had been unattractive during his opulence, and that was the affection which he felt for the young widow. This sentiment stirred his heart now when it was about to cease to beat. What! make poor Le-ou share his misery! Never!

The fourth period, which precedes the dawn, and during which it seems as if life everywhere were suspended, passed, causing Kin-Fo the strongest emotions. He listened anxiously. His eyes peered into the darkness. He tried to catch the slightest sound, and more than once he thought he heard a door creak as if opened by some cautious hand. No doubt Wang hoped to find him asleep, and would kill him as he slept.

And now a sort of re-action took place in him: he both feared and desired this visit of the terrible Tai-ping.

The dawn was lighting the zenith in the fifth period, and day was slowly approaching. Suddenly the door opened. Kin-Fo arose, having lived more in this last second than during his whole life.

Soun stood before him, with a letter in his hand, and simply said, "In great haste."

Kin-Fo had a presentiment. He seized the letter, which bore the postmark San Francisco; tore open the envelope, and read it very quickly; then, rushing out of the Pavilion of Long Life, he shouted, —

"Wang! Wang!"

In a moment he reached the philosopher's room, and flung open the door.

Wang was not there! Wang had not slept in the house that night! And, when at Kin-Fo's cries the servants hastened to him and searched the yamen, it became evident that Wang had disappeared without leaving a trace.

CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH CRAIG AND FRY ARE OFFICIALLY PRESENTED TO THE NEW PATRON OF THE CENTENARY.

"YES, Mr. Bidulph, a simple operation on change in the American style," said Kin-Fo to the agent of the insurance company.

"Well played, indeed; for every one was taken in," said the Honorable William J. Bidulph, with the smile of a connoisseur.

"Even my correspondent," answered Kin-Fo. "It was a make-believe suspension of payment, sir, a make-believe failure, and make-believe news. A week afterwards they paid with open doors. The stock, which had depreciated eighty per cent, had been bought up at the lowest rate by the Central Bank; and, when people came to ask the director the cause of the failure, he answered amiably, 'One hundred and seventy-five per cent.' This is what my correspondent has written in this letter, which arrived only this morning, just as I thought myself absolutely ruined."

"Were you going to make an attempt on your life?" cried Mr. Bidulph.

"No," answered Kin-Fo; "but I expected to be assassinated."

"Assassinated!"

"By my written authority,—an assassination agreed upon, and sworn to, and which would have cost you"—

"Two hundred thousand dollars," answered Mr. Bidulph, "as you were insured against death in every form. Ah! we should have mourned you greatly, dear sir."

"On account of what I should have cost you?"

"With interest," saying which, Mr. Bidulph took his patron's hand, and shook it cordially in the American fashion.

"But I do not understand," he added.

"But you will understand," replied Kin-Fo; and he acquainted him with the nature of the contract entered into with him by a man in whom he ought to have confidence. He even quoted the terms of the letter which that person had in his pocket, which agreed to save him from pursuit, and guaranteed every immunity. But one grave feature was, that the promise would be fulfilled; for the pledge would be kept without the shadow of a doubt.

"Is this man a friend?" asked the agent.

"He is," answered Kin-Fo.

"Then, through friendship"—

"Through friendship, and, who knows? perhaps also through self-interest. I am insured for fifty thousand dollars, payable to him."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" cried Mr. Bidulph. "Then it is Mr. Wang."

"The same."

"A philosopher! he will never consent."

Kin-Fo was about to say, "This philosopher is an old Tai-ping, and during the first half of his life committed more murders than would suffice to ruin the Centenary, if all those whom he killed were insured in it. For eighteen years he has been able to restrain his ferocious instincts; but now that the opportunity is offered him, and he believes me to be ruined and determined to die, and knowing besides that he will gain a small fortune by my death, he will not hesitate."

Kin-Fo said nothing of this however; for it would have been compromising Wang, whom perhaps Mr. Bidulph would not have hesitated to denounce to the governor of the province as a former Tai-ping. That would have saved Kin-Fo, no doubt; but the philosopher would have been lost.

"Well," said the agent of the insurance company, "there is one very simple thing to do."

"What is it?"

"You must inform Mr. Wang that the contract is broken, and get back the compromising letter which"—

"That is easier said than done," answered Kin-Fo. "Wang disappeared yesterday, and no one knows where."

"Humph!" said the principal agent, in whom this interjection denoted perplexity.

"And now, dear sir, you no longer wish to die?" he said, looking attentively at his patron.

"Faith, no!" answered Kin-Fo. "The operation of the Central Bank in California has almost doubled my fortune; and I am going to get married in good earnest, but not until I find Wang, or till the time agreed upon shall have fully expired."

"When does it expire?"

"On the 25th of June of the present year. During the interval the Centenary runs considerable risk, and it should take measures in consequence."

"And find the philosopher," said the Honorable William J. Bidulph.

The agent walked up and down a few moments, with his hands behind his back, then said, —

"Well, we will find this all-important friend again were he hidden in the bowels of the earth. But till then, sir, we shall prevent any attempt at assassination, as we have prevented you from attempting suicide."

"What do you mean?" asked Kin-Fo.

"This: that since the 30th of April last, the day you signed your insurance policy, two of my agents have followed you, observing where you went, and watching what you did."

"I have not noticed it."

"Ah! but they are discreet men. I ask your permission to present them to you, now that they no longer need to conceal their movements, unless from Mr. Wang."

"Certainly," answered Kin-Fo.

"Craig-Fry must be here, since you are."

"Craig-Fry!" he called. Craig and Fry were indeed behind the door of the private office. They had "tracked" the patron of the Centenary as far as the office of the latter, and were waiting for him at the entrance.

"Craig-Fry," said the agent, "while his policy remains, you will no longer have to save our precious client from himself, but from one of his own friends, the philosopher Wang, who has bound himself to kill him."

Thus the two inseparables were made acquainted with the situation, which they understood and accepted. The wealthy Kin-Fo belonged to them, and he could not have more faithful servants.

Now what course should they take?

There were two courses, as the principal agent observed: they must either remain carefully shut up in Kin-Fo's house at Shanghai, so that Wang could not enter without the knowledge of Fry-Craig, or else use all despatch to ascertain where the said Wang was to be found, who must be made to give up the letter, which must be considered null and void.

"The first plan will not answer," said Kin-Fo. "Wang could reach me without being seen, since my house is his: so we must find him at all cost."

"You are right, sir," answered Mr. Bidulph. "The surest way is to find the said Wang, and we will find him."

"Dead or" — said Craig.

"Alive!" concluded Fry.

"No, living," cried Kin-Fo. "I do not intend to have Wang in danger a moment through my fault."

"Craig and Fry," added Mr. Bidulph, "you are to answer for our patron's safety seventy-seven days longer; for till the 30th of next June he will be worth to us two hundred thousand dollars."

Thereupon the insuree and the principal agent of the Centenary took leave of each other; and ten minutes later Kin-Fo, escorted by his two body-guards, who were not to leave him again, entered the yamen.

When Soun saw Craig and Fry settled as officers in the house, he could not but feel some regret. There would be no more errands, answers, or taels. Besides, his master, in resuming life, had begun to abuse the lazy, awkward valet again. Unhappy Soun! what would he have said had he known what the future had in store for him?

Kin-Fo's first thought was to "phonograph" to Cha-Coua Avenue, Pekin, the news of the change of fortune which made him richer than before. The young woman then heard the voice of him she believed lost forever repeat his most loving words. He would see his little younger sister again. The seventh moon would not pass without his hastening to her never to leave her. But, after having refused to make her poor and wretched, he did not wish to run the risk of making her a widow. Le-ou did not quite comprehend what this last phrase meant: she only understood one thing, that

her lover had returned, and that before two months he would be near her.

That day there was not a woman in all the Celestial Empire happier than the young widow.

Indeed, a complete re-action had taken place in Kin-Fo's ideas. He had become a fourfold *millionnaire*, owing to the fruitful operations of the Central Bank in California, and he now wished to live, and to live well. Twenty days of emotion had wholly changed him. Neither the mandarin Pao-Shen, nor the merchant Yin-Pang, nor Tim the high liver, nor Houal the literary man, would have recognized in him the indifferent host who had taken farewell of them on one of the flower-boats on the River of Pearls. Wang would not have believed his eyes were he himself there, but he had disappeared without leaving a trace. He did not return to the house at Shang-hai; which caused Kin-Fo great anxiety, and obliged the two body-guards to keep watch over him every moment.

A week later, on the 24th of May, nothing had been heard of the philosopher; and, consequently, there was no possibility of going in search of him. In vain had Kin-Fo and Craig and Fry searched the conceded districts, the shops, the suspected quarters, and the environs of Shang-hai; and in vain had the most skilful tipaos of the police sought him in the country around. The philosopher could not be found.

However, Craig and Fry, who were more and more anxious, doubled their precautions. Neither

Wang, therefore, must be notified; but this could not be done directly.

The Honorable William J. Bidulph was led to employ indirect means through the press. In a few days notices were sent to the Chinese newspapers, and telegrams to the foreign papers in both worlds.

The "Tching-Pao," the official paper in Pekin, those in Chinese at Shang-hai and Hong-Kong, the journals of most extensive circulation in Europe and the two Americas, reproduced to satiety the following notice: —

"Mr. Wang of Shang-hai is begged to consider that the agreement made between Kin-Fo and himself, dated the 2d of May last, is cancelled; the said Mr. Kin-Fo having now only one desire, that of dying a centenarian."

After this strange advertisement, the following appeared, which was much more practical and effective: —

"Two thousand dollars, or thirteen hundred taels, to whoever will make known to William J. Bidulph, principal agent of the Centenary at Shang-hai, the present residence of Mr. Wang of said city."

There was nothing to make one suppose that the philosopher had been running round the world during the interval of fifty-five days given him to fulfil his promise: he was more likely concealed in the environs of Shang-hai, in order to profit by every opportunity; but the Honorable William J. Bidulph did not think he could take too many precautions.

Several days passed, and the situation did not change. Now it happened that these advertisements — reproduced in profusion in the form familiar to Americans (Wang! Wang!! Wang!!! on one side, and Kin-Fo! Kin-Fo!! Kin-Fo!!! on the other) — had the final result of attracting public attention, and provoking general merriment.

Every one laughed at them, even the people in the remotest provinces of the Celestial Empire.

"Where is Wang?"

"Who has seen Wang?"

"Where does Wang live?"

"What is Wang doing?"

"Wang, Wang, Wang!" cried the Chinese children in the street.

These questions were soon in every one's mouth; and Kin-Fo, this worthy Celestial "whose strongest desire was to become a centenarian," who proposed to contend for longevity with the celebrated elephant whose twentieth lustrum was just drawing to a close in the Palace of the Stables of Pekin, could not fail to be soon very much in the fashion.

"Well, is Sire Kin-Fo getting on in years?"

"How does he do?"

"Is his digestion good?"

"Shall we see him wear the yellow robe of old men?"[1]

[1] Every Chinaman who reaches his eightieth year has the right to wear a yellow robe. Yellow is the color of the imperial family, and is an honor paid to old age.

Thus the civil and military mandarins, merchants on change and in the counting-houses, the people in the streets and squares, and the boatmen in their floating cities, accosted each other with these mocking phrases.

The Chinese are very gay and very caustic, and one will agree that they had now some cause for gayety; and jokes of every kind went the rounds, and even caricatures were hung on the walls of private houses.

Kin-Fo, to his great dissatisfaction, had to endure the inconveniences of this singular celebrity.

They went so far as to sing songs about him to the tune of "Man-Tchiang-Houng," — the wind which blows through the willows. And a lament appeared, which put the whole scene pleasantly: "The Five Periods of the Centenarian." What an alluring title! and what profit it made at three sapeques a copy!

If Kin-Fo fretted at all this noise made over his name, Mr. Bidulph, on the contrary, rejoiced; but Wang was none the less concealed from every eye.

Now things went so far, that the position was no longer endurable to Kin-Fo. If he went out, a train of Chinese of every age and both sexes accompanied him through the streets, and along the wharves, and even through the conceded territories, and also through the country. When he returned home, a jeering crowd of the worst kind gathered before the doors of the yamen. Every

morning he had to appear at the balcony of his room, in order to prove to his people that he had not prematurely slept in the coffin in the kiosk of Long Life. The newspapers published a bulletin of jokes about his health with ironical comments, as if he belonged to the reigning dynasty of the Tsing. In short, he became perfectly ridiculous.

It therefore happened that one day, the 21st of May, the greatly vexed Kin-Fo went to see the Honorable William J. Bidulph, and imparted to him his intention of immediately leaving the place. He had had enough of Shang-hai and the Shang-hai people.

"But this will be running greater risks," was the very true remark of the principal agent.

"I care little for that," replied Kin-Fo. "Take your precautions in consequence."

"But where will you go?"

"Straight ahead."

"Where will you stop?"

"Nowhere."

"And when will you return?"

"Never."

"And if I should have news of Wang?"

"To the devil with Wang! Oh, how foolish I was to give him that absurd letter!"

At heart Kin-Fo felt the wildest desire to find the philosopher. The idea that his life was in another's hands began to irritate him intensely, and very soon haunted him. Wait a month longer in such a situation! He never could resign himself to it.

The lamb was changing its nature.

"Well, leave then," said Mr. Bidulph. "Craig and Fry will follow you wherever you go."

"As you please," answered Kin-Fo; "but I warn you they will have to run about some."

"They will run about, my dear sir; they will run about: for they are not men who would think of sparing their legs."

Kin-Fo returned to the yamen, and, without losing a moment, made his preparations for departure.

Soun, to his great annoyance, — for he did not like moving from one place to another, — was obliged to accompany his master. But he did not venture to make any remarks, which would certainly have cost him a good bit of his braid.

As for Fry-Craig, like true Americans, they were always ready to travel, even were it to the end of the world; and they only asked one question.

"Where, sir" — said Craig.

"Are you going?" added Fry.

"To Nankin first, and to the devil next."

The same smile appeared simultaneously on Craig-Fry's lips. Both were delighted! "To the devil!" Nothing could please them better. They only took time to bid farewell to the Honorable Mr. Bidulph, and to array themselves in the Chinese costume, which would cause them to attract less attention during the journey through the Celestial Empire.

An hour later Craig and Fry, with their bags at

their side, and revolvers in their belts, returned to the yamen.

At nightfall Kin-Fo and his companions cautiously left the port of the American concession, and took passage on the steamboat which plies between Shang-hai and Nankin.

This voyage is a mere excursion. In less than twelve hours a steamboat, profiting by the ebb-tide, can ascend by the Blue River as far as the ancient capital of Southern China.

During this short passage, Craig-Fry, after having first scrutinized every passenger, paid the most minute attentions to their precious Kin-Fo. They were acquainted with the philosopher, — what inhabitant of the three concessions did not know that good and kindly face? — and they assured themselves that he had not followed them on board. Having taken these precautions, what constant attention they lavished on the patron of the Centenary! — feeling of every support on which he might lean; moving their feet over every bridge on which he sometimes stood, in order to ascertain if they were safe; drawing him away from the boiler, which they did not feel quite sure of; urging him not to expose himself to the fresh evening air, nor to get cold in the damp night-air; taking care that the port-holes in his cabin were hermetically closed; scolding Soun, the neglectful valet, who was never near when his master called him; taking his place, when necessary, by serving Kin-Fo with tea and cakes

in the first period; and finally sleeping at his cabin-door, all dressed, with their belts provided with various articles for safety, and ready to come to his aid if, by an explosion or collision, the steamboat should sink beneath the deep waters of the river.

But no accident occurred to put the brave and ceaseless devotion of Fry-Craig to the test. The steamboat rapidly descended the Wousung, sailed into the Yang-Tse-Kiang, or Blue River, coasted along the island Tsong-Ming, left behind her the fires of Ou-Song and Lang-Chan, and ascended with the tide through the province of Kiang-Sou, and, on the morning of the 22d, landed her passengers safe and sound on the wharf of the ancient imperial city.

Thanks to the two body-guards, Soun's braid had not grown shorter by the twelfth part of an inch during the voyage. Therefore the lazy fellow could have complained with very poor grace.

It was not without a motive that Kin-Fo, on leaving Shang-hai, stopped first at Nankin; for he thought there might be some chance of his finding the philosopher. Wang, perhaps, might be drawn to this unfortunate city by the memories of the past, since it was the principal centre of the rebellion of the Tchang-Mao. Was it not at that time occupied and defended by that modest schoolmaster, the formidable Rong-Sieou-Tsien, who became the chief of the Tai-ping, and so long held the Mandshurian authority in check?

Was it not in this city that he proclaimed the new era of "Great Peace"?[1] Was it not there that he poisoned himself in 1864, that he might not surrender himself alive to his enemies? Was it not from the ancient palace of the kings that his young son escaped, whom the Imperials were soon to behead? Were not his bones taken from their tomb beneath the ruins of the burned city, and thrown to the vilest animals? Finally, was it not in this province that one hundred thousand of Wang's former companions were massacred in three days?

It was therefore possible that the philosopher, feeling a kind of homesickness after the change in his life, had taken refuge in these places so full of personal recollections; and in a few hours he could reach Shang-hai, and, when ready, deal his intended blow.

That is why Kin-Fo proceeded first to Nankin, and wished to stop at the first stage in his journey. If he could meet Wang there, every thing would be explained, and he could end this absurd situation. If Wang did not appear, he would continue his wanderings through the Celestial Empire till the expiration of the time when he would have nothing further to fear from his former teacher and friend.

Kin-Fo, accompanied by Craig and Fry, and followed by Soun, proceeded to a hotel, situated in one of the thinly populated localities, around which

[1] The meaning of Tai-ping.

three-quarters of the ancient capital extends like a desert.

"I am travelling under the name of Ki-Nan," said Kin-Fo to his companions; "and I desire that my real name shall not be spoken again for any reason whatever."

"Ki" — said Craig.

"Nan," finished Fry.

"Ki-Nan," repeated Soun.

By this one will understand that Kin-Fo, who was running away from the annoyances of his fame at Shang-hai, did not wish to meet with them again on his journey. He said nothing to Fry-Craig of the possible presence of the philosopher at Nankin. These too particular agents would have used unnecessary precautions, which the pecuniary value of their charge justified, but which would have greatly annoyed him.

Indeed, if they had been travelling through a dangerous country, with a million dollars in their pocket, they could not have been more prudent. After all, was it not a million that the Centenary had confided to their care?

The whole day was passed in visiting the various localities, squares, and streets in Nankin; and from the gate at the west to the gate at the east, and from north to south, they rapidly traversed the whole city, which was now so shorn of its ancient splendor. Kin-Fo walked on quickly, talking little, but observing a great deal.

No suspicious face appeared, neither on the

canals frequented by the masses of the people, nor in the paved streets, which were almost hidden under the ruins, and already overrun with weeds. No stranger was seen wandering through the partly demolished marble porticos and calcined walls, which mark the site of the imperial palace, the theatre of the final struggle, where Wang, no doubt, resisted till the last hour. No one was seen by the visitors around the yamen of the Catholic missionaries, whom the inhabitants of Nankin tried to massacre in 1870, nor in the neighborhood of the arsenal, which was newly built with the imperishable brick of the celebrated porcelain tower, and whose ground was strewn with the Tai-ping.

Kin-Fo, who seemed to feel no fatigue, kept moving on. Followed by his two acolytes, who did not falter, and outdistancing the unfortunate Soun, who was but little accustomed to this kind of exercise, he left by the eastern gate, and ventured out into the deserted country.

An interminable avenue, bordered by enormous animals of granite, now appeared at some distance from the enclosing wall; and Kin-Fo walked through it more rapidly still.

A small temple stood at the end of it, and behind rose a "tumulus," as high as a hill. Under its turf reposed Roug-On the bonze, who had become an emperor, and who was one of the bold patriots, who, five centuries before, had struggled against the foreign power.

And might not the philosopher have come to refresh himself with these glorious memories on the tomb where rested the founder of the dynasty of the Ming?

The tumulus was deserted, and the temple abandoned. There were no other guardians than those giants faintly outlined on the marble, and the fantastic animals which people the long avenue.

But on the door of the temple Kin-Fo perceived, with emotion, several signs which some hand had engraved there. He approached, and read these three letters, —

W. K–F.

Wang, Kin-Fo. There was no doubt that the philosopher had recently passed this place.

Kin-Fo, without saying a word, looked around, but found — no one.

That evening Kin-Fo, Craig, Fry, and Soun, who dragged on behind, returned to the hotel, and the next morning left Nankin.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH KIN-FO, HIS TWO ACOLYTES, AND HIS VALET START ON AN ADVENTURE.

WHO is the traveller who is seen hastening over the principal water or carriage routes and up the canals and rivers of the Celestial Empire? He goes on and on, not knowing at evening where he will be the next day. He passes through cities without seeing them, and stops at hotels or inns only to catch a few hours' sleep, and at restaurants to take hasty meals. Money does not stay in his hand, for he throws it around to facilitate his progress.

It is not a merchant on business; it is not a mandarin whom the minister has charged with some important mission, an artist in search of the beauties of nature, a *savant* whose tastes lead him to seek ancient documents stored in the temples of bonzes or llamas in old China. Neither is it a student going to the Pagoda of Examinations to get his university degrees; nor a priest of Buddha going about the country to inspect the small rural altars erected among the roots of the sacred banyan; nor a pilgrim going to fulfil some vow at one of the five holy mountains of the Celestial Empire.

It is the pretended Ki-Nan, accompanied by Fry-Craig, ever active and ready, followed by Soun, who was more and more weary and reluctant. It is Kin-Fo, in the odd mood which leads him to fly from, and at the same time to seek, the undiscoverable Wang. It is the patron of the Centenary, who only seeks, in this incessant going and coming, forgetfulness of his situation, and perhaps a guaranty against the invisible dangers by which he is menaced. The best marksman stands a chance of missing a target in motion, and Kin-Fo wishes to be this target which never ceases to move.

The travellers had taken at Nankin one of the fast American steamboats, the vast floating hotels which sail on the Blue River. Sixty hours afterwards they landed at Ran-Keou, without even having admired that odd-looking rock, the Little Orphan, which rises up in the middle of the current of the Yang-tze-Kiang, and where a temple made use of by the bonzes boldly crowns the summit.

At Ran-Keou, situated at the confluence of the Blue River and its important tributary, the Ran-Kiang,[1] the wandering Kin-Fo stopped only half a day. There again *souvenirs* of the Tai-ping were found in irreparable ruin; but neither in this commercial city — which, to tell the truth, is only an annexation of the prefecture of Ran-Yang-Fou,

[1] In Southern China streams and rivers are indicated by the termination "Kiang;" in Western China, by the termination "Ro."

built on the right shore of the tributary stream — nor at Ou-Tchang-Fou, the capital of the province of Rou-Pe, on the right shore of the stream, did the uncapturable Wang leave any trace of his passage. But there were plenty of those terrible letters which Kin-Fo had found at Nankin on the tomb of the crowned bonze.

If Craig and Fry had ever hoped that on this journey through China they could carry away any idea of its customs, or acquire any knowledge of its cities, they were soon undeceived. They would not have had time to take notes; and their impressions would have been reduced to a few names of cities and townships, or to the days of the month. But they were neither curious nor talkative: indeed, they hardly ever spoke. Of what use would it have been? What Craig thought, Fry thought also. It would have been only a monologue. Therefore they, like their patron, did not notice that double appearance common to the majority of Chinese cities, which are dead within, and full of life in their suburbs.

At Ran-Keou they barely perceived the European quarter, with its broad, rectangular streets and elegant houses, and its promenade shaded by tall trees, which skirts the shore of the Blue River. They had eyes to see only one man, and that man remained invisible.

The steamboat, owing to the tide which raised the waters of the Ran-Kiang, could ascend this tributary for one hundred and thirty leagues more, as far as Lao-Ro-Keou.

Kin-Fo was not the man to abandon this style of locomotion, which pleased him. On the contrary, he expected to go to the point where the Ran-Kiang would cease to be navigable. Beyond that he would consider.

Craig and Fry would have asked nothing better than to have had this kind of navigation the whole course of the journey; for their *surveillance* was easier on board a boat, and dangers were less imminent. Later, on the routes through the provinces of Central China, which were less safe, it would be quite different.

As for Soun, this steamboat life pleased him very well; for he did not have to walk or do any thing, and left his master to the good offices of Craig-Fry. All he thought of was to take a nap in his corner after having breakfasted, dined, and supped conscientiously; for the cooking was good. A change of food on board the boat a few days later would have indicated to any one but this ignorant fellow that a change of latitude had taken place in the geographical situation of the travellers; for, during the meals, wheat was suddenly substituted for rice in the form of unleavened bread, which was quite agreeable to the taste when eaten fresh from the oven.

Soun, as a true Chinaman of the south, grieved for his daily rice. He managed his little chopsticks with so much skill when he dropped the kernels from the cup into his vast mouth, and absorbed such quantities of them! Than rice and

tea, what more is desired by a true Son of Heaven?

The steamboat, ascending the course of the Ran-Kiang, had just entered the wheat-region, where the elevation of the country becomes more marked. On the horizon are outlined several mountains, crowned with fortifications which were built under the ancient dynasty of the Ming. The artificial banks, which hold the waters of the river, give way to low shores, enlarging its bed at the expense of its depth. The government of Guan-Lo-Fou now appeared.

Kin-Fo did not go on shore during the few hours required to put the fuel on board in the presence of the custom-house boats. What was he going to do in that city, which he cared so little to see. He had but one desire, since he no longer found a trace of the philosopher; and that was to travel farther still into the interior of Central China, where, if he did not catch Wang, Wang would not catch him.

After Guan-Lo-Fou, came two cities built opposite one another, — the commercial city of Fan-Tcheng on the left shore, and the government of Siang-Yang-Fou on the right, — the first being a suburb full of the stir of people and the bustle of business; the second, the residence of the authorities, and more dead than alive.

And after Fan-Tcheng the Ran-Kiang, ascending directly to the north at a sharp angle, was still navigable as far as Lao-Ro-Keou. But the

water was not deep enough for the steamboat to go farther.

On leaving this last stopping-place, the conditions of the journey were changed. One was obliged to abandon the water-courses, those "walking roads," and either walk or substitute for the soft, gliding motion of a boat, the shaking, jolting, and pitching of the deplorable vehicles used in the Celestial Empire. Unhappy Soun! A series of torments, fatigues, and reproaches were about to begin again.

And, indeed, whoever had followed Kin-Fo from province to province, from city to city, in this fantastic journey, would have had much to do. One day he would travel in a carriage, which was only a box roughly fastened by big iron nails to the axletree of two wheels, drawn by two restive mules, and covered by a linen canopy, which streams of rain and the sun's rays alike penetrated. Another day he might be seen stretched in a mule-chair, which is a sort of sentry-box suspended between two long bamboo poles, and subjected to such violent rolling and pitching, that a bark under like circumstances would have cracked in every part. Craig and Fry, on two asses, which rolled and pitched more than the chair, trotted along near the doors like two aides-de-camp. Soun, when rather rapid walking was necessary, went on foot, grumbling and cursing, and refreshing himself more than was necessary by frequent swallows of Kao-Liang brandy. He, too, felt a peculiar rolling motion;

but the cause was not due to the unevenness of the ground. In a word, the little party could not have been more tossed on a stormy sea.

It was on horseback — and poor horses too, as one may believe — that Kin-Fo and his companions made their entry into Si-Gnan-Fou, the ancient capital of the Central Empire, where the emperors of the dynasty of Tang formerly resided.

But to reach this distant province of Chen-Si, to cross the interminable plains, arid and bare, how many dangers and how much fatigue there was to endure!

The May sun, in a latitude which is that of Southern Spain, was already unendurable, and caused a fine dust to form on roads that never have been blessed with paving; so that, on coming out of these yellowish whirlwinds which dinged the air like an unwholesome smoke, one was gray from head to foot. It was the country of the "lœss," a singular geological formation peculiar to the north of China, and which is neither earth nor rock, or, rather, it is a rock which has not yet had time to become solid.[1]

As for the dangers, they were only too real in a country where the police have an extraordinary fear of being stabbed by thieves. If in towns the tipaos left the field free to rogues, if in the heart of the city the inhabitants seldom ventured into the streets at night, then judge the degree of security that country roads afforded. Several

[1] Léon Rousset.

times suspicious groups of men crossed the travellers' path when they entered those deep, narrow defiles, hollowed out between the beds of the lœss; but the sight of Craig-Fry with revolvers at their belts had thus far intimidated the tramps on the highways. Yet the agents of the Centenary on many an occasion felt the most serious fear, if not for themselves, at least for the live million dollars they were escorting. Whether Kin-Fo fell by Wang's poignard or a malefactor's knife, the result would be the same: it was the company's coffers which would receive the blow.

Under these circumstances, Kin-Fo, who was no less well armed, was only too eager to defend himself; for he valued his life more than ever, and, as Craig-Fry said, would kill himself to preserve it.

It was not probable that any trace of the philosopher would be found at Si-Gnan-Fou; for a former Tai-ping would not have thought of taking refuge there. It is a city whose strong walls blocked the way of the rebels in the time of the rebellion, and is occupied by a numerous garrison from Mandshuria.

Why should Wang come here, unless he had a particular taste for archæological curiosities (which are very numerous in this city), and a desire to plunge into the mysteries of epigrams, of which the museum, called "The Forest of Tablets," contains incalculable riches?

Therefore, on the day after his arrival, Kin-Fo, leaving this city, which is an important business

centre between Central Asia, Thibet, Mongolia, and China, continued on his way to the North. Following Kao-Lin-Sien, Sing-Tong-Sien, through the valley-route of the Ouei-Ro, whose waters are tinged with the yellow hue of the lœss through which it has made its bed, the little party reached Roua-Tcheou, which was the centre of a terrible Mussulman insurrection in 1860. Kin-Fo and his companions, after great fatigue, travelling sometimes in a boat and sometimes in a wagon, reached the fortress of Tong-Kouan, which is situated at the confluence of the Ouei-Ro and the Rouang-Ro.

The Rouang-Ro is the famous Yellow River. It descends directly from the north, and, crossing the eastern provinces, flows into the sea which bears its name, and is no more yellow than the Red Sea is red, the White Sea white, or the Black Sea black. Yes, it is a celebrated river, of celestial origin no doubt, since its color is that of the emperors, the Sons of Heaven; but it is also "China's Sorrow," a title given it on account of its terrible overflows, which have partially rendered the Imperial Canal impassable.

At Tong-Kouan the travellers would have been safe even at night. It is no longer a commercial, but a military city, in which the Mandshurian Tartars, who form the chief number of the Chinese army, live in fixed habitations, and not in camps. Possibly Kin-Fo intended to stop here and rest a few days, or, perhaps, would have sought a good room, bed, and table in a desirable hotel, — which

would not have displeased Fry-Craig, and less likely Soun. But this blundering fellow had the imprudence to give to the custom-house officer his master's real instead of assumed name, which cost him a good inch of his braid. He forgot that it was no longer Kin-Fo, but Ki-Nan, whom he had the honor of serving. Kin-Fo's anger was extreme, and it led him to leave the city at once. The name had produced its effect. The celebrated Kin-Fo had arrived at Tong-Kouan. People wished to see this unique man, whose "sole and only desire was to become a centenarian."

The terrified traveller, followed by his two guards and his valet, had just time to take his flight through the crowds of curious people who followed in his footsteps. "On foot this time, on foot!" he ordered, and ascended the shores of the Yellow River, proceeding thus till he and his companions stopped from exhaustion in a little town where his *incognito* must secure him some hours of tranquillity.

Soun, who was absolutely disconcerted, dared not say a word. He in his turn, with the ridiculous little rat-tail yet remaining, was an object of the most disagreeable ridicule. The boys ran after him, mocking him, and calling him names. So he, too, was in a great hurry to arrive. But where? since his master, as Mr. Bidulph said, expected to keep on the move, and was doing so.

This time there were no horses, asses, wagons, or chairs in this modest town, twenty leagues from

Tong-Kouan, where Kin-Fo sought refuge. There was no prospect but to remain here, or continue on foot. This was not likely to inspire good humor in the pupil of the philosopher Wang, and he showed little philosophy on this occasion. He accused every one, with only himself to blame. Ah! how he sighed for the time when he had nothing to do but live! If to appreciate happiness, it was necessary to know *ennui*, trouble, and torments, as Wang used to say, he had plenty of them now, and some to spare.

And yet, in running about the country, he met on the way worthy people without a sou, who, nevertheless, were happy. He was able to observe those varied forms of happiness which cheerfully performed labor brings.

Here were laborers bending over their ploughing, and there workmen singing as they handled their tools. Was it not precisely to this absence of labor that Kin-Fo owed the absence of desires, and, consequently, the lack of happiness here below? Ah! the lesson was complete: he believed so, at least. No, friend Kin-Fo, it was not.

After searching thoroughly in the village, and knocking at every door, Craig and Fry finally discovered only one vehicle, and that it would only carry one person; and, graver still, that the propelling power of said vehicle was wanting.

It was a wheelbarrow, — Pascal's wheelbarrow, — and perhaps invented before his time by those ancient inventors of powder, the art of writing,

the compass, and kites. In China the wheel of this conveyance, which is rather broad in diameter, is placed, not at the end of the shafts, but in the middle, and moves across the body of the wheelbarrow, like the central wheel in some steamboats. The body is, then, divided into two parts, following its axis, in one of which the traveller can stretch himself out, and in the other stow his baggage.

The propelling power is and can be only a man, who pushes it before him instead of dragging it after him, and is therefore behind the traveller, whose view he does not obstruct, as does the driver of an English cab. When the wind is favorable, — that is, when it blows from behind, — man joins to his efforts this natural force, which costs him nothing, by setting a mast in the fore part of the vehicle, and raising a square sail; so that, when the breeze is strong, instead of pushing the wheelbarrow, it is the latter which draws him along, — often faster than he wishes.

The vehicle was purchased with all its accessories, and Kin-Fo took his place in it. The wind was fresh, and the sail was raised.

"Come, Soun!" said he.

Soun began quite naturally to stretch himself out in the second compartment of the wheelbarrow.

"Into the shafts!" cried Kin-Fo in a certain tone, which admitted of no reply.

"Master — what — I — I" — exclaimed the terrified Soun, whose limbs shook like those of a foundered horse.

"Don't blame any one but yourself, your tongue, and your own foolishness."

"Come, Soun!" cried Fry-Craig.

"Into the shafts!" repeated Kin-Fo, looking at what pigtail remained to the unhappy valet. "Into the shafts, animal! and mind you do not jolt me, or"—

Kin-Fo's first and middle finger of the right hand, brought together after the manner of scissors, so well completed his thought, that Soun passed the reins around his shoulders, and seized the shafts with both hands. Fry-Craig placed themselves on both sides of the wheelbarrow; and with the aid of the breeze the little band moved off at a gentle trot.

We must renounce any attempt to describe Soun's mute, powerless rage, when he had passed into the place of a horse. And yet Craig and Fry often consented to relieve him. Very fortunately the south wind came to their aid, and performed three-quarters of the work. The wheelbarrow was well balanced by the position of the central wheel; and the work of the man in the shafts became like that of the steersman at the helm of a ship: he had only to maintain himself in the right direction.

And in this equipage Kin-Fo might have been seen travelling through the western provinces of China, walking when he felt the need of stretching his limbs, and being trundled in the wheelbarrow when he needed rest.

Thus Kin-Fo, having avoided Houan-Fou and

Ca-fong, ascended the banks of the celebrated Imperial Canal, which, not quite twenty years ago, before the Yellow River had resumed its course through its former bed, formed a beautiful navigable route from Sou-Tcheou, the tea-country, as far as Pekin, a distance of about a hundred leagues.

Thus he crossed Tsinan and Ho-Kien, and went through the province of Pe-tche-Lee, where is situated Pekin, the quadruple capital of the Celestial Empire.

Thus also he passed Tien-Sing, a large city of four hundred thousand inhabitants, which is protected by a fortified wall and two forts, and whose large port, formed by the junction of the Pei-ho and the Imperial Canal, makes — by importing cotton goods from Manchester, woollen goods, copper, iron, German matches, sandal-wood, etc., and by exporting jujubes, water-lily leaves, and tobacco from Tartary, etc. — a sum amounting to seventy millions. But Kin-Fo did not once think of visiting the celebrated Pagoda of Infernal Torments in this curious Tien-Sing. He did not pass through the entertaining Streets of Lanterns and Old Clothes in the eastern suburb; nor breakfast at the Restaurant of Harmony and Friendship, kept by the Mussulman Leou-Lao-Ki, whose wines are famous, whatever Mahomet may think of them; nor leave his big red card, for good reasons, at the palace of Li-Tchong-Tang, the viceroy of the province since 1870, a member of the Privy Council and also of the Council of the Empire, and who

bears, with the yellow jacket, the title of Fei-Tze-Chao-Pao.

No! Kin-Fo, constantly being trundled in the wheelbarrow, and Soun constantly trundling him, crossed the wharves where mountains of sand-bags were piled. They passed the outskirts of the city, the English and American concessions, the race-grounds, the country covered with sorghum, barley, sesamum, vineyards, kitchen-gardens, rich in vegetables and fruits; and plains whence depart, by the million, hares, partridges, and quail, which are chased by the falcon, the merlin, and the hobby. All four followed for twenty-four leagues the paved road which leads to Pekin between trees of various essences and the tall reeds of the river, and thus arrived safe and sound at Tong-Tcheou; Kin-Fo still being valued at two hundred thousand dollars, Craig-Fry sound as at the beginning of the journey, and Soun out of breath, limping, and foundered in both legs, and having only three inches of a queue on the top of his cranium.

It was now the 19th of June. The time granted Wang would expire in a week.

Where was Wang?

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH IS HEARD THE CELEBRATED LAMENT CALLED "THE FIVE PERIODS IN THE LIFE OF A CENTENARIAN."

"GENTLEMEN," said Kin-Fo to his two body-guards, when the wheelbarrow stopped at the entrance to the suburb of Tong-Tcheou, "we are now only forty leagues from Pekin, and it is my intention to stop here until the time that the agreement between Wang and myself shall have ended. In this city of four hundred thousand souls it will be easy for me to remain unknown, if Soun does not forget that he is in Ki-Nan's service, a humble merchant in the province of Chen-Si."

"No, certainly not: Soun would not forget it again. His stupidity had forced him to fill the place of a horse the past eight days, and he hoped that Mr. Kin-Fo" —

"Ki" — said Craig.

"Nan," added Fry.

— "would not again take him from his customary work; and now, considering his fatigue, he asked just one thing of Mr. Kin-Fo" —

"Ki" — said Craig.

"Nan," repeated Fry.

— "permission to sleep forty-eight hours at least at a stretch, with bridle slackened, or rather without any harness at all."

"For a week if you wish," answered Kin-Fo. "I shall be sure at least that in sleeping you will not talk."

Kin-Fo and his companions then busied themselves in looking for a good hotel, which was not wanting at Tong-Tcheou. This vast city is in truth but an immense suburb of Pekin. The paved road which unites it to the capital is bordered the whole length with villas, houses, agricultural hamlets, tombs, small pagodas, and grassy enclosures; and on this route the travel of carriages, cavaliers, and foot-passengers is constant.

Kin-Fo was acquainted with the city, and was escorted to the Tae-Ouang-Miao, — the Temple of the Sovereign Princes. It is simply a bonze temple transformed into a hotel, where strangers can lodge quite comfortably.

Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry immediately located there; and the two agents took a room adjoining that of their precious charge.

As for Soun, he disappeared to sleep in the corner assigned him, and was seen no more.

An hour later Kin-Fo and his followers left their rooms, breakfasted with a good appetite, and asked each other what was necessary to be done.

"It is necessary," answered Craig-Fry, "to

read 'The Official Gazette,' in order to see if there is any article which concerns us."

"You are right," answered Kin-Fo. "Perhaps we shall learn what has become of Wang."

All three then left the hotel. Through prudence, the two acolytes walked by the side of their patron, looking into the faces of the passers-by without allowing themselves to be approached by any one. They went thus through the narrow streets of the city, and reached the wharves. There a copy of "The Official Gazette" was bought, and eagerly read.

Nothing! nothing in it but the promise of two thousand dollars, or thirteen hundred taels, to whoever would make known to William J. Bidulph the present residence of Mr. Wang of Shang-hai.

"So," said Kin-Fo, "he has not returned."

"Therefore he has not read the advertisement concerning him," answered Craig.

"And will still keep to the terms of the agreement," added Fry.

"But where can he be?" cried Kin-Fo.

"Sir," said Fry-Craig, "do you think you are in greater danger during the last days of the agreement?"

"Most certainly I do," answered Kin-Fo. "Wang does not know the change in my circumstances, and it seems probable he will not be able to free himself from the necessity of keeping his promise. Therefore, in two or three days, I shall be in greater danger than I am to-day, and in six greater still."

"But when the time has passed?"

"I shall have nothing more to fear."

"Well, sir," answered Craig-Fry, "there are only three ways of ridding yourself of all danger during these six days."

"What is the first?" asked Kin-Fo.

"It is to return to the hotel," said Craig, "to shut yourself up in your room, and wait till the time has expired."

"And the second?"

"Is to have yourself arrested as a criminal," answered Fry, "in order to be placed in safety in the prison of Tong-Tcheou."

"And the third?"

"Is to pass yourself off for dead," answered Fry-Craig, "and only to come to life again when safety is yours once more."

"You do not know Wang," cried Kin-Fo. "Wang would find his way into my hotel, my prison, or my tomb. If he has not killed me so far, it is because he has not wished to do so, or it was because it seemed to him preferable to leave me the pleasure or the anxiety of waiting. Who knows what can have been his motive? Under all circumstances, I prefer to wait in liberty."

"We will wait then. Yet" — said Craig.

"It seems to me that" — added Fry.

"Gentlemen," interrupted Kin-Fo, in a curt tone, "I will do what pleases me. After all, if I die before the 25th of this month, what will your company lose?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars," answered Fry-Craig. "Two hundred thousand dollars, which we shall have to pay to your heirs."

"And I lose all my fortune, without counting my life. I am, then, more interested than you in the matter."

"To be sure."

"Very true."

"Continue, then, to watch over me as long as you think proper; but I shall act after my own inclination."

There was nothing to be said in reply.

Craig-Fry were then obliged to give him more liberty, and to double their precautions. But they did not conceal from themselves that the gravity of the situation grew more decided every day.

Tong-Tcheou is one of the most ancient cities in the Celestial Empire. Situated on the canal arm of the Pei-ho, at the junction of another canal which unites it with Pekin, it is the centre of great business activity, while its suburbs are extremely lively from the going and coming of its inhabitants.

Kin-Fo and his companions were more strongly impressed by this stir when they reached the wharf, where sampans and the junks of commerce are anchored.

Finally Craig and Fry, after having weighed every thing, came to the conclusion that they were safer in the midst of a crowd. The death of their patron would apparently be owing to

suicide: the letter which would be found on him would leave no doubt on that score. Wang, therefore, would have no interest in striking him, except under certain conditions, which did not present themselves in frequented streets or in the public place of a city. Consequently, Kin-Fo's guardians did not fear an immediate attack. The only thing now was to ascertain if the Tai-ping, through marvellous skill, had not been following in their track since they left Shanghai, so they made good use of their eyes in scanning the faces of the passers-by.

Suddenly a name was spoken which made them listen intently.

"Kin-Fo! Kin-Fo!" cried several Chinese children from among the crowd, jumping up and down, and clapping their hands.

Had Kin-Fo been recognized? and did his name produce the usual effect?

The unwilling hero stopped.

Craig-Fry stood ready, in case of need, to make a rampart of their bodies around him.

These cries were not addressed to Kin-Fo; for no one seemed to suspect that he was there: therefore he did not stir, but waited to find out why his name had been spoken.

A group of men, women, and children had formed around a strolling singer, who seemed greatly in favor with the street public, who shouted, clapped their hands, and applauded him in advance.

When the singer found himself in the presence of a sufficiently large audience, he drew from his robe a package of placards, with colored illustrations, then shouted in a sonorous voice, —

"The Five Periods in the Life of the Centenarian."

It was the famous lament heard everywhere in the Celestial Empire.

Craig-Fry wished to drag their charge away; but this time Kin-Fo obstinately persisted in remaining. No one knew him. He had never heard the lament which told his ways and doings, and he desired to hear it.

The singer began thus : —

"In the first period the moon shines on the pointed roof of the house at Shang-hai. Kin-Fo is young, — he is twenty, — and resembles the willow whose first leaves show their little green tongue.

"In the second period the moon shines on the east side of the costly yamen. Kin-Fo is forty. His ten thousand business-affairs are successful, according to his wishes. The neighbors sing his praises."

The singer's expression changed, and he seemed to grow old, at every verse. They loaded him with applause.

He continued, —

"In the third period the moon lights the open space, Kin-Fo is sixty. After the green leaves of summer come the yellow chrysanthemums of autumn.

"In the fourth period the moon has declined to the west. Kin-Fo is eighty. His body is drawn up like a crab in

boiling water. His life is waning, — waning with the star of night.

"In the fifth the cocks hail the birth of dawn. Kin-Fo is a hundred. He is dying, his strongest desire accomplished; but the disdainful Prince Ien refuses to receive him. Prince Ien does not like old people who would go into second childhood in his court. The old Kin-Fo will wander through all eternity without ever being able to rest."

And the crowd applauded, and the singer sold his laments by the hundred, at three sapeques a copy.

And why should not Kin-Fo buy one? He drew out some small change from his pocket, and, extending his arm through the first rows of the crowd, held out a handful; but all at once his hand opened, and the money fell to the ground.

Opposite him stood a man whose gaze met his.

"Ah!" cried Kin-Fo, who could not restrain this exclamation, which was both interrogative and exclamatory.

Fry-Craig surrounded him, thinking him recognized, menaced, shot at, dead perhaps.

"Wang!" he cried.

"Wang!" repeated Craig-Fry.

It was Wang in person. He had just perceived his former pupil; but, instead of rushing at him, he pushed vigorously through the last rows of the crowd, and ran off as fast as his long legs would carry him.

Kin-Fo did not hesitate. He wished to understand his intolerable situation, and set out in

pursuit of Wang, escorted by Fry-Craig, who wished neither to go ahead nor to remain behind.

They, too, had recognized the lost philosopher, and understood, by the surprise the latter had just manifested, that he no more expected to see Kin-Fo than Kin-Fo expected to see him.

Now, why was Wang running away? It was quite inexplicable; but yet he was running off as if all the police in the Celestial Empire were at his heels.

It was a mad pursuit.

"I am not ruined! Wang, Wang! not ruined!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Rich, rich!" repeated Fry-Craig.

But Wang kept at too great a distance to hear these words, which were intended to make him stop. He passed the wharf, the canal, and reached the entrance of the western suburb.

The three pursuers flew after him, but did not catch up with him: on the contrary, the fugitive threatened to out-distance them.

Half a dozen Chinamen, to say nothing of two or three couple of tipaos, joined Kin-Fo, concluding that a man who could make off so fast must be a malefactor.

It was a curious spectacle, this breathless, shouting, screaming group, adding on the way numerous volunteers to its number. Those around the singer had plainly heard Kin-Fo speak the name Wang. Fortunately the philosopher had not answered by that of his pupil; for all the city would

have followed so celebrated a man. But Wang's name sufficed, — Wang, that enigmatical person, whose discovery was worth an enormous reward. This was well known; so that if Kin-Fo ran after the eight hundred thousand dollars of his fortune, Craig-Fry after the two hundred thousand insurance, the others were running after the two thousand dollars reward; and it must be acknowledged it was enough to make them all take to their heels.

"Wang, Wang, I am richer than ever!" Kin-Fo kept saying, as well as his speed would permit.

"Not ruined, not ruined!" repeated Fry-Craig.

"Stop, stop!" cried the majority of the pursuers, increasing in number, and running faster and faster, and making the dust fly under their feet.

Wang heard nothing, but, with his elbows close to his chest, kept on, unwilling to exhaust himself by answering, or to lose any of his speed for the pleasure of turning his head.

They were now beyond the suburbs, and Wang hastened over the paved route along the canal. On this route, which was then almost deserted, the field was free. He still increased his speed; but, naturally, his pursuers also doubled their efforts, and this wild chase was kept up nearly twenty minutes, and nothing could foretell the result. However, the fugitive appeared to lose strength somewhat: the distance which he had maintained between his pursuers and himself up to this moment tended to diminish.

So Wang, perceiving this, doubled on himself, and disappeared behind the shrubbery in front of a small pagoda at the right of the road.

"Ten thousand taels to whoever will stop him!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Ten thousand taels!" repeated Craig-Fry.

"Ya, ya, ya!" screamed the group farthest ahead.

All had crossed the road, following the philosopher's tracks, and were winding around the walls of the pagoda. Wang had come in sight again, and was following a narrow cross-path along a canal, where, in order to perplex his pursuers, he made a new turn, which placed him again on the paved road.

But, when there, it was apparent that he was becoming exhausted; for he turned his head round several times. Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry, on their part, were as fresh as ever. They walked on, or rather flew; and not one of the rapid runners after taels succeeded in gaining upon them.

The *dénoûment* was now approaching. It was only a question of time, and a comparatively short time, — a few moments at most.

Wang, Kin-Fo, and his companions had all reached the place where the main road crossed the river over the celebrated bridge of Palikao.

Eighteen years before, on the 21st of September, 1860, they would not have had free passage over this point in the province of Pe-che-lee. The highway was then encumbered by fugitives

of another kind. The army of Gen. San-Ko-Li-Tzin, an uncle of the emperor, being repulsed by French battalions, halted at Palikao on this bridge, — a magnificent work of art, with a white marble balustrade, and bordered by a double row of gigantic lions. It was there that the Mandshurian Tartars, so incomparably brave in their fatalism, were cut down by the balls from European cannon.

But the bridge, which still bears the marks of battle in its defaced statues, became free.

Wang, growing weaker, dashed across the road; and Kin-Fo and the rest, by a great effort, approached him. Soon twenty, then fifteen, then ten steps only, separated them.

It was of no use now to try to stop Wang by useless words, which he could not or would not hear. They must catch up with him, seize him, and bind him if necessary. They could explain afterwards.

Wang understood that he was about to be overtaken, and, as if from some inexplicable notion, seemed to dread finding himself face to face with his former pupil, and was going to risk his life to escape him.

Indeed, with one bound, Wang jumped upon the railing of the bridge, and flung himself into the Pei-ho.

Kin-Fo stopped a moment, and called, —

"Wang! Wang!"

Then making a sudden bound, he shouted, —

"I will have him alive!" and he sprang into the river.

"Craig," said Fry.

"Fry," said Craig.

"Two hundred thousand dollars in the water!" And both, leaping over the railing, plunged in to the succor of the ruinous patron of the Centenary.

A few of the volunteers followed them. They looked like so many clowns leaping bars.

But so much zeal was useless. Fry-Craig and the others, allured by the premium, searched the Pei-ho in vain. Wang could not be found. Drawn on by the current, no doubt, the unfortunate philosopher had floated away.

Had Wang only desired to escape pursuit by plunging into the river, or, for some mysterious reason, had he resolved to end his days? no one could tell.

Two hours later, Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry, disappointed, but perfectly dry and refreshed, and Soun waked up out of the depths of his sleep, and swearing as was to be expected, were on their way to Pekin.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE VISITOR, WITHOUT FATIGUE, CAN TRAVEL THROUGH FOUR CITIES BY VISITING ONLY ONE.

THE Pe-che-lee, the most western of the eighteen provinces of China, is divided into nine departments, and one of them has for its capital Chun-Kin-Fo; that is, the City of the First Order Submissive to Heaven, which city is Pekin.

Let the reader imagine a Chinese tomahawk, with a surface of six thousand hectares, a circumference of eight leagues, whose irregular parts would exactly fill a rectangle, and he will have an idea of this mysterious Kambalu, which Marco Polo, towards the close of the thirteenth century, so curiously describes; for such is the capital of the Celestial Empire.

In fact, Pekin comprises two distinct cities, which are separated by a large *boulevard* and fortified wall. One of them, the Chinese city, is a rectangular parallelogram; the other, the Tartar city, an almost perfect square. The latter encloses two other cities, — the Yellow City (Hoang-Tching), and Tsen-Kin-Tching (the Red or Forbidden City).

Formerly these cities numbered more than two million inhabitants: but emigration, caused by extreme want, has reduced this number to a million in all, Tartars and Chinese; and, added to these, about ten thousand Mussulmans, besides a certain number of Mongolians and inhabitants of Thibet, compose the floating population.

The plan of these two cities, one above the other, presents almost the exact figure of an old-fashioned sideboard, whose upper part would be formed by the Chinese city, and the base by the Tartar city.

Six leagues of a fortified enclosure, from forty to fifty feet in height and width, with an outside wall of brick, defended for two hundred metres on both sides by jutting towers, surround the Tartar city with a magnificent paved promenade; and throw out at their angles four enormous bastions, which have guard-houses on their platforms. The emperor, the Son of Heaven, as one sees, is well guarded.

In the centre of the Tartar city, the Yellow City, with a surface of six hundred and sixty hectares, with an outlet of eight gates, contains a coal-mountain three hundred feet high, the highest point of the capital; also a superb canal called the Central Sea, spanned by a marble bridge; two bonze convents; a pagoda of examinations; the Pei-tha-sse, a bonze temple built on a peninsula which seems as if suspended over the clear waters of the canal; the Peh-Tang, an establishment of Catholic mis-

sionaries; the imperial pagoda, superb with its roof of sonorous bells and lapis-lazuli tiles; the great temple dedicated to the ancestors of the reigning dynasty; the Temple of Spirits; the Tem- of the Spirit of Winds; the Temple of the God of Thunder, of the Inventor of Silk, of the Lord of Heaven; the five Pavilions of Dragons; and the Monastery of Eternal Repose.

In the centre of this quadrilateral is hidden the Forbidden City, whose surface measures eighty hectares, and which is surrounded by the ditch of a canal spanned by seven marble bridges. It need not be explained, that, the reigning dynasty being from Mandshuria, the first of these three cities is principally inhabited by a population of the same race. As for the Chinese, they are consigned to the lower part of the sideboard, outside in the annexed city. One reaches the interior of this Forbidden City — which is surrounded by red brick walls, crowned by a capital of golden-yellow, varnished tiles — through a gate at the south, called the Gate of Great Purity, which is only opened to emperors and empresses. There may be found the temple of the ancestors of the Tartar dynasty, sheltered under a double roof of variegated tiles; the temples Che and Tsi, consecrated to terrestrial and celestial spirits; the Palace of Sovereign Concord, reserved for state ceremonies and official banquets; the Palace of Medium Concord, where are seen the pictures of the ancestors of the Sons of Heaven; the Palace of the Protecting Con-

cord, whose central hall is occupied by the imperial throne; the Pavilion of Nei-Ko, where the Great Council of the Empire is held, and presided over by Prince Kong,[1] the minister of foreign affairs, and paternal uncle of the last sovereign; the Pavilion of Literary Flowers, where the emperor goes once a year to interpret the sacred books; the Pavilion of Tchouane-Sine-Tiene, in which the sacrifices in honor of Confucius take place; the Imperial Library; the Office of Historians; the Von-Igne-Tiene, where the wood and copper plates used in printing books are kept; shops in which court garments are prepared; the Palace of Celestial Purity, a place for the deliberation of family affairs; the Palace of the Superior Terrestrial Element, where the young empress dwelt; the Palace of Meditation, into which the sovereign retires when he is ill; the three palaces where the emperor's children are brought up; the

[1] M. T. Choutzé, in his book of travels, entitled "Pekin and the North of China," relates the following in regard to Prince Kong, an incident which is worth remembering: —

"In 1870, during the sanguinary war which desolated France, Prince Kong made a visit — I do not know on what occasion — to all the foreign diplomatic representatives. It was through the legation of France, the first which he met, that he made this round of calls. The news of the disaster of Sedan had just been received; and the Count of Rochechouart, then minister of French affairs, told it to Prince Kong, who, calling one of the officers of his suite, said, —

"'Take a card to the Prussian legation, and say that I cannot call till to-morrow.' Then, turning to Count Rochechouart, he added, —

"'I cannot decently pay a visit of congratulation to the representative of Germany on the same day that I offer condolences to the representative of France.'

"Prince Kong would be a prince everywhere."

temple of deceased relatives; the four palaces reserved for the widow and wives of Hien-Fong, who died in 1861; the Tchou-Sieou-Kong, the residence of imperial spouses; the Palace of Preferred Goodness; intended for the official receptions of court ladies; the Palace of General Tranquillity, a singular name for a school for the children of superior officers; the Palace of Purification and Fasting; the Palace of the Purity of Jade, inhabited by the princes of the blood; the temple of the protecting god of the town; a temple of Thibetan architecture; the magazine of the crown; the offices of court officials; the Lao-Kong-Tchou, the dwelling of the eunuchs, of which there are no less than five thousand in the Red City; and, to be brief, other palaces, amounting to forty-eight in all, can be counted within the imperial enclosure, without including the Tzen-Kouang-Ko, the Pavilion of Purpled Light, situated on the borders of the lake of the Yellow City, where, on the 19th of June, 1873, the five ministers of the United States, Russia, Holland, England, and Prussia were admitted to the presence of the emperor.

What ancient forum ever presented such a mass of buildings, so varied in form, and so rich in precious objects? What city, or what capital of the European States, could offer such a list of names?

And to this enumeration must still be added the Ouane-Cheou-Chane, the Summer Palace, situated

two leagues from Pekin. Having been destroyed in 1860, one can hardly find among its ruins its Gardens of Perfect Clearness and Tranquil Clearness; its hill, the Source of Jade; and its mountain, Ten Thousand Longevities.

Surrounding the Yellow City is the Tartar city, where are located the French, English, and Russian legations; the Hospital of London Missions; the Catholic Missions of the East and North; the ancient stables of elephants, which contain but one, blind in one eye, and a centenarian. There are found the Bell Tower, with a red roof, in a framework of green tiles; the Temple of Confucius; the Convent of the Thousand Lamas; the Temple of Fa-qua; the ancient observatory, with its big square tower; the yamen of the Jesuits; and the yamen of the literary people, where examinations are made. There also rise the triumphal arches of the West and East; there, carpeted with nelumbos and blue nymphœas, flow the Northern Sea and the Sea of Rushes, which come from the Summer Palace to feed the canal of the Yellow City. There one sees the palaces where reside the princes of the blood; the ministers of finance, of ceremonies of war, of public works, and foreign relations. There also are the Court of Accounts, the Astronomical Tribunal, and the Academy of Medicine. All are mingled together pellmell in narrow streets, which are dusty in summer and wet in winter, and are generally bordered by low, wretched houses, among which looms up

some great dignitary's hotel, shaded by beautiful trees. Then, through the crowded avenues, one meets stray dogs, Mongolian goats laden with charcoal, palanquins with four or eight bearers, according to the rank of the dignitary, chairs, carriages with mules, and chariots; besides, there are poor people, who, according to M. Choutzé, form an independent vagrant population of seventy thousand beggars. It is not rare, says M. P. Arène, for some mendicant to be drowned in these streets, which are ingulfed in a black, offensive mud, — streets cut up by pools of water, where one sinks knee-deep.

In many directions the Chinese city of Pekin, which is called Vai-Tcheng, resembles the Tartar city; but it differs, however, from it in others. Two celebrated temples occupy the southern portion, — the Temple of Heaven and that of Agriculture: to which must be added the Temples of the Goddess Koanine, of the Spirit of Earth, of Purification, of the Black Dragon, and of the Spirits of Heaven and Earth; the ponds of gold-fish; the Monastery of Fayouan-sse; the markets, the theatres, etc.

This rectangular parallelogram is divided in the north and south by an important artery, named Grand Avenue, which runs from the Gate Houng-Ting at the south to the Tien Gate at the north. In a transverse direction it is crossed by another longer artery, which cuts the first at a right angle, and runs from the Cha-Coua Gate at

the east to the Couan-Tsu Gate at the west. It is called Cha-Coua Avenue; and it was at a hundred steps from its point of intersection with Grand Avenue that the future Madame Kin-Fo resided.

It will be remembered, that, a few days after having received the letter which announced Kin-Fo's ruin, the young widow received a second contradicting the first, and telling her that the seventh moon would not end before her "little younger brother" would return to her.

We have no need to ask whether Le-ou counted the days and hours after that date, the 17th of May. But Kin-Fo had not given her any news of himself during this wild journey, whose singular manner of travelling he would under no pretext disclose. Le-ou had written to Shang-hai; but her letters remained unanswered. One can therefore understand what her anxiety must have been, when at this date, the 19th of June, no letter had reached her.

So, during these long days, the young woman had not left her house in Cha-Coua Avenue, where, with the greatest anxiety, she was waiting for news. The disagreeable Nan was not very well calculated to cheer her solitude. This "old mother" was more whimsical than ever, and deserved to be turned out of doors a hundred times in the course of a moon.

But what endless and anxious hours before Kin-Fo would reach Pekin! Le-ou counted them, and the number seemed to her very many.

If the religion of Lao-Tse is the most ancient in China; if the doctrine of Confucius, promulgated about the same time (nearly five hundred years before Jesus Christ), is followed by the emperor, the literary people, and high mandarins, — it is Buddhism, or the religion of Fo, which counts the greatest number of worshippers on the face of the globe, — almost three hundred million.

Buddhism comprises two distinct sects, — one having for its ministers bonzes dressed in gray with red head-gear; and the other, lamas with robes and head-gear of yellow.

Le-ou was a Buddhist of the first sect; and the bonzes often saw her coming to the Temple of Koan-Ti-Miao, which is consecrated to the Goddess Koanine. There she offered up prayers for her friend, burned perfumed sticks, and prostrated herself in the porch of the temple.

That day she thought she would go and implore aid of the Goddess Koanine, and offer up still more fervent prayers; for she felt a presentiment that some grave danger menaced him whom she awaited with natural impatience. She then called the "old mother," and bade her to go to the square in Grand Avenue, and order a chair and carriers.

Nan shrugged her shoulders, according to her very hateful habit, and went out to execute the order.

Meanwhile the young widow, alone in her boudoir, looked sadly at the silent machine,

which no longer enabled her to hear the sweet voice of the absent one.

"Ah!" said she, "he must at least know that I have not ceased to think of him; and I wish my voice to repeat this to him on his return."

And, pushing the spring which puts the phonographic wheel in motion, she spoke aloud the sweetest phrases her heart could inspire.

Nan, entering suddenly, interrupted this tender monologue.

The chair-bearers were awaiting madame, "who might as well have remained at home."

Le-ou did not listen, but, leaving the "old mother" to grumble at her pleasure, immediately went out, and got into her chair, after having directed the carriers to take her to Koan-Ti-Miao.

The road was a straight one. They had only to turn around Cha-Coua Avenue at the cross-roads, and ascend Grand Avenue as far as the Gate of Tien.

But the chair did not proceed without difficulties. Indeed it was still the business-hours, and there was at all times considerable obstruction in this neighborhood, which is one of the most populous in the capital. The peddlers' booths along the road gave the avenue the appearance of a fair-ground with its thousand noisy sounds and bustle. Then open-air orators, public lecturers, fortune-tellers, photographers, and caricaturists, who had little respect for mandarin authority, were

shouting and adding their voices to the general hubbub.

Here was a funeral passing with great pomp, and obstructing the travel; there a wedding procession, less gay, perhaps, than the funeral, but blocking the way quite as much. In another place there was an assemblage before the yamen of a magistrate, where a complainer had just struck on the "drum" to ask for justice. On the Leou-Ping Rock a malefactor was kneeling, who had received a beating, and was guarded by police-soldiers, who wore the Mandshurian cap with red tassels, and who carried a short spear and two sabres in the same scabbard. Farther on, several reluctant Chinamen, tied together by their braids, were being led to the station. Farther still, a poor fellow, with the left hand and right foot through separate holes in a piece of board, went limping along with the step of some queer animal. There was also a thief shut up in a wooden box, with his head protruding through the back, who was left to public charity. Others were seen wearing yokes, like oxen.

These unfortunate men were evidently seeking the most frequented localities in the hope of earning more money, and to speculate on the kindness of passers-by, to the disadvantage of beggars of every kind; such as one-armed and lame men, paralytics, files of blind men led by a one-eyed man, and the thousand varieties of real or pretended cripples who swarm in the cities of the Empire of Flowers.

Le-ou's chair progressed but slowly, and the obstruction was greater as it approached the outer *boulevard.* Le-ou arrived there, however, and stopped inside of the bastion which defends the gate near the Temple of the Goddess Koanine.

Here she alighted from the chair, entered the temple, and kneeled at first; then bowed before the statue of the goddess. Afterwards she proceeded to a religious machine, which bears the name of "prayer-mill."

It was a sort of reel with eight branches, on the ends of which were little streamers ornamented with sacred texts. A bonze stood near the machine, gravely awaiting worshippers, and more particularly the fee for their devotions.

Le-ou handed a few taels to the servant of Buddha to defray her part of the expenses of religion; then with her right hand she took hold of the handle of the reel, and lightly turned it, after placing her left hand on her heart. No doubt the wheel did not turn rapidly enough for the prayer to be effectual; for the priest said, with a gesture of encouragement, "Faster, faster!"

And the young woman began to spin faster. She kept it up nearly a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the bonze assured her that the prayers of the supplicant would be granted.

Le-ou again prostrated herself before the Goddess Koanine, left the temple, and entered her chair to return home. But, as she was turning into Grand Avenue, the bearers moved aside

quickly; for soldiers were roughly clearing the streets, shops were being closed by order, and the side-streets were barred by strips of blue guarded by tipaos.

A lengthy *cortége* filled a part of the avenue, and was noisily approaching.

The Emperor Koang-Sin, whose name means "Continuation of Glory," was returning to his good Tartar city, whose central gate was about to open to him.

Two of the advance-guard led the way; while the rest were followed by a company of outriders, ranged in two rows, and having a *bâton* slung across their shoulders. Next to them came a group of officers of high rank, who held a yellow parasol with ruffles, and ornamented with the dragon, which is the emblem of the emperor, as the phœnix is that of the empress.

The palanquin, whose yellow silk hangings were drawn up, next appeared, and was borne by sixteen men wearing red dresses covered with white rosettes, and closely fitting embroidered silk waistcoats. Princes of the blood, dignitaries on horses harnessed in yellow silk as a sign of very high rank, escorted the imperial equipage.

In the palanquin was reclining the Son of Heaven, cousin of the Emperor Tong-Tche and nephew of Prince Kong.

After the palanquin came grooms and a relay of carriers. Soon this *cortége* vanished in the Gates of Tien, to the great satisfaction of pedes-

trians, merchants, and beggars, who could now resume business.

Le-ou's chair continued on its way, and she was set down at her house after an absence of two hours.

Ah! what a surprise the good Goddess Koanine had prepared for the young woman!

At the very moment the chair stopped, a carriage, covered with dust and drawn by two mules, drove up to the door; and Kin-Fo, followed by Craig-Fry and Soun, alighted.

"Is it you?" cried Le-ou, who could not believe her eyes.

"Dear little younger sister!" answered Kin-Fo, "you surely did not doubt that I would return."

Le-ou did not answer, but took her friend's hand, and drew him into the boudoir to the little phonograph, the discreet confidant of her troubles.

"I have not for a single moment ceased to expect you, dear heart embroidered with silken flowers!" she said. And, adjusting the wheel, she pressed the spring, which set the machine in motion.

Kin-Fo then heard a sweet voice repeat what the loving Le-ou had been saying to him a few hours before his arrival:—

"Return, little dearly beloved brother! return to me! May our hearts no longer be separated as are the two stars of Orpheus and Lyra! I think only of your return"—

The machine was silent a second, only a

second ; then resumed, in a harsh voice this time, —

"It is not enough to have a mistress, but one must have a master in the house, it seems ! May Prince Ien strangle them both ! "

This second voice was only too easily recognized. It was Nan's. The disagreeable "old mother" continued to speak after Le-ou's departure, while the apparatus was in a condition to receive impressions, but without her suspicion that it registered her imprudent words.

Nan was dismissed that very day, and they sent her off without even waiting until the last days of the seventh moon.

Maid-servants and valets, beware of phonographs !

CHAPTER XV.

WHICH CERTAINLY CONTAINS A SURPRISE FOR KIN-FO, AND PERHAPS FOR THE READER.

THERE was now no obstacle in the way of the marriage of the wealthy Kin-Fo of Shang-hai with the amiable Le-ou of Pekin. In six days the time would expire in which Wang was to fulfil his promise; but the unfortunate philosopher had paid for his mysterious flight with his life.

There was nothing henceforth to fear. The wedding could take place; and the appointed time was the 25th of June, which Kin-Fo had wished to make the last day of his life.

The young woman now understood every thing, and knew through what vicissitudes he had passed, who, although refusing once to make her wretched, and again to make her a widow, had now returned, free at last, to make her happy.

But Le-ou, on hearing of the death of the philosopher, could not restrain a few tears. She knew and liked him; for he was the first confidant of her feelings towards Kin-Fo.

"Poor Wang!" she said. "How we shall miss him at our wedding!"

"Yes, poor Wang!" replied Kin-Fo, who also mourned the companion of his youth, and friend of twenty years' standing. "But still," he added, "he would have killed me according to his oath."

"No, no!" said Le-ou, shaking her pretty head: "perhaps he sought death beneath the waves of the Pei-ho, only to avoid keeping that frightful promise."

Alas! the supposition was only too credible, that Wang had preferred to drown himself in order to escape the obligation of fulfilling his agreement.

On this point Kin-Fo and the young woman agreed; and there were two hearts from which the philosopher's image would never fade.

As a matter of course, after the catastrophe at the Palikao bridge, the Chinese newspapers stopped issuing the Hon. William J. Bidulph's ridiculous advertisements; so Kin-Fo's annoying renown died away as quickly as it had been created.

And now, what was to become of Craig and Fry? They were commissioned to protect the Centenary's interests till the 30th of June, — that is to say, for ten days longer; but, in truth, Kin-Fo did not now need their services. Was it to be feared that Wang would attack his person? No, since he was no longer in existence. Had they any reason to fear that their charge would lift a suicidal hand against himself? None whatever. Kin-Fo asked only to live, to really live, and for the longest possible time. Therefore

there was no longer a need of Fry-Craig's unceasing watch.

But, after all, these two originals were worthy men; and, if their devotion was paid only to the patron of the Centenary, it was none the less every moment very earnest and faithful. Kin-Fo begged them to be present at the wedding festivities, and they accepted his invitation.

"Besides," jokingly observed Fry to Craig, "marriage is sometimes suicide."

"One gives away his life while preserving it," answered Craig, with an amiable smile.

The day after her departure Nan was replaced in the house in Cha-Coua Avenue by a more suitable person. An aunt of Le-ou, Madame Lutalou, had come to fill the part of mother to her till the wedding-ceremony. Madame Lutalou, the wife of a mandarin of the fourth rank of the second order of the blue button, who was the former imperial lecturer and member of the Academy of Han-Sin, possessed all the moral and physical qualities necessary to worthily perform her important duties.

As for Kin-Fo, as he was not one of those Celestials who are fond of the neighborhood of courts, he expected to leave Pekin after his marriage, and would only be truly happy when his young wife was settled in the elegant yamen in Shang-hai.

He was obliged to choose a temporary apartment; and he found what he needed in the Tiene-

Fou-Tang, the Temple of Celestial Happiness, — a very comfortable hotel and restaurant, situated near the *boulevard* of Tiene-Men between two Tartar and Chinese cities. There also boarded Craig and Fry, who, through habit, could not make up their minds to leave their charge. Soun had resumed his duties, always grumbling, but taking good care not to remain near any indiscreet phonograph. Nan's adventure made him somewhat prudent.

Kin-Fo had the pleasure of meeting two Canton friends at Pekin, — the merchant Yin-Pang and the literary man Houal. Besides these he knew a few dignitaries and merchants in the capital, all of whom considered it a duty to offer their assistance on this great occasion.

This once indifferent man, this immovable pupil of the philosopher, was now really happy.

Kin-Fo spent the time not given to preparations for the wedding with Le-ou, who was happy when with her lover. What need was there of supplying her with the costliest presents from the most magnificent stores in the capital so long as he was her dearest treasure? She thought only of him, and constantly repeated to herself the sage maxims of the celebrated Pan-Hoei-Pan, —

"If a woman has a husband after her own heart, she will have a lifelong blessing.

"A wife should have unlimited respect for him whose name she bears, and keep a constant watch over herself.

"A wife should only be the shadow and the mere echo of her husband.

"The husband is the heaven of the wife."

Meanwhile the preparations for the wedding, which Kin-Fo wished to have as brilliant as possible, were progressing.

In the house in Cha-Coua Avenue the thirty pair of embroidered shoes, which are a necessity to the *trousseau* of a Chinese bride, were ranged along in a row. The sweetmeats of the house of Sinuyane, preserves, dried fruits, burnt almonds, barley-candy; with plum, orange, ginger, and Indian-orange sirups; superb silks; jewels of precious stones and of finely chiselled gold; and rings, bracelets, finger-nail cases, pins for the hair, etc., and all the charming fancies of Pekin, — were profusely displayed in Le-ou's boudoir.

In this strange Central Empire, when a young girl marries, she brings no dower to her husband, but is really sold to his parents or to him; and, in default of brothers, can only inherit a part of her father's fortune, and then only when he so declares by will. These conditions are usually arranged by persons who are called the "mei-jin," and the marriage is not decided upon until there is a full agreement in regard to these matters. The young *fiancée* is then presented to the parents of the husband, who does not see her till, locked up in her chair, she reaches the marriage-home. Then the key is handed him, and he opens the door.

If his *fiancée* pleases him, he holds out his hand to her; if she does not, he quickly closes the door, and is released by forfeiting the earnest-money to her parents.

There could be nothing of this in Kin-Fo's marriage; for he knew the lady, and was not obliged to purchase her.

This simplified matters very much.

The 25th of June came at last, and all was ready. For three days, according to custom, Le-ou's house was brilliantly lighted; and for three nights Madame Lutalou, who represented the family of the bride, wholly deprived herself of sleep, it being considered proper to do this, in order to show a becoming sadness at the moment when the bride leaves her father's home. If Kin-Fo's parents had been living, his own house would also have been illuminated as a sign of mourning; "because the marriage of the son is considered to be a reminder of the death of the father, whom he is about to succeed," says the "Hao-Khieou-Tchouen."

But, if these customs need not be followed in the union of a couple who were absolutely free to dispose of themselves, there were others which they must respect.

Therefore the astrological formalities had not been neglected. The horoscopes, having been drawn according to every rule, indicated a perfect compatibility of disposition and similarity of destiny; and the period of the year and the age of the moon were found to be propitious. Indeed,

never had a marriage been surrounded by more favorable auspices.

The wedding-reception was to take place at eight o'clock in the evening at the Hotel of Celestial Happiness, her husband's house, where the wife was to be conducted in great state. In China no appearance before a civil magistrate, priest, bonze, lama, or any one else, is necessary.

At seven o'clock Kin-Fo, still attended by Craig and Fry, who were as gay as if they had been present at a European wedding, received his friends on the threshold of the apartment.

What an excess of politeness! These notable personages received an invitation in microscopic characters on red paper: —

"Mr. Kin-Fo of Shang-hai humbly presents his respects to Mr. ——, and begs him more humbly still to be present at the humble ceremony," etc.

All the guests had come to pay their respects to the married couple. The gentlemen were to partake of a magnificent feast reserved for them alone, while the ladies assembled at another table especially intended for them.

The merchant Yin-Pang and the literary Houal were there; and then came several mandarins, who wore on their official hats a red ball as large as a pigeon's egg, which indicated that they belonged to the first three orders. Others of lower rank had only opaque-blue or opaque-white buttons. The majority were civil dignitaries of Chinese origin, as of right were the friends of a citizen of

Shang-hai who was hostile to the Tartar race. All were handsomely dressed in brilliant robes, and with their gay head-dresses formed a dazzling *cortége.*

Kin-Fo, as politeness required, awaited them at the entrance of the hotel, and, as soon as they arrived, led them to the reception-room, after begging them twice, at every door opened to them by the servants in full livery, to pass before him. He called them by their titles, asked after their "distinguished healths," and wished to be informed in regard to that of their "distinguished families." In short, the closest observer of mannerisms as well as sincere politeness could not have found the slightest fault with his behavior.

Craig and Fry looked on admiringly at all these formalities: but, while admiring, they did not lose sight of their irreproachable charge; for one thought had come to them both.

Suppose Wang had not perished in the river, as they believed. What if he were among these guests? The twenty-fourth hour of the twenty-fifth day of June — the final hour — had not yet come! The hand of the Tai-ping was not disarmed! What, if at the last moment —

No, that was not probable; but yet it was possible. Therefore, as a last act of prudence, Craig and Fry looked carefully around among the company, but saw no suspicious-looking face.

During this time the bride left her house in Cha-Coua Avenue, and took a seat in her palanquin.

Although Kin-Fo did not wish to assume the mandarin costume, which every *fiancé* has a right to wear, — through a feeling of honor for this institution of marriage which ancient legislators held in great esteem, — Le-ou conformed to the rules of the best society, and was resplendent in a red dress of beautiful embroidered silk. Her face was almost hidden behind a veil studded with pearls, which seemed to have been distilled like dewdrops from the costly diadem whose golden band encircled her forehead. Precious stones and the choicest artificial flowers brightened her hair and long black braids; and Kin-Fo could not fail to think her more beautiful than ever when she would alight from the palanquin, whose door his own hand would soon open.

The wedding procession started, turned around the square to enter Grand Avenue, and follow the *boulevard* Tiene-Men. No doubt it would have been more magnificent if it had been a funeral instead of a wedding; but, as it was, it was attractive enough to cause passers-by to stop and look.

The palanquin was followed by Le-ou's friends and companions, who bore with great pomp the different articles of the *trousseau*. About twenty musicians marched in front, making a great noise with copper instruments, among which was heard the deep-sounding gong. A crowd of men, some bearing torches and some lanterns of a thousand colors, surrounded the palanquin. The bride remained concealed from every one; for the first

eyes to behold her must, according to etiquette, be those of her husband.

With all this state, and surrounded by a noisy crowd, the procession reached the Hotel of Celestial Happiness about eight o'clock in the evening.

Kin-Fo stood at the elegantly decorated entrance, awaiting the palanquin, in order to open the door, after which he would assist his bride to alight, and escort her to a private reception-room, where both would salute heaven four times, and then repair to the nuptial feast. The bride would kneel to her husband four times, and he, in his turn, twice to her. They would sprinkle two or three drops of wine around as a libation, and offer food to the interceding spirits. Then two cups of wine would be brought them, which they would partly empty; and, mixing what would remain in one cup, each would drink from it, and then the union would be consecrated.

The palanquin having arrived, Kin-Fo stepped forward to meet it. A master of ceremonies handed him the key, and he unlocked the door, and held out his hand to the pretty Le-ou, who was greatly agitated. The bride stepped out lightly, and passed through the group of guests, who bowed respectfully, and raised their hands as high as their breasts.

Just as the young woman was about to enter the hotel, a signal was given, and very large luminous kites rose into the sky from the open space; and

their many-colored figures of dragons, phœnixes, and other marriage-emblems, could be seen fluttering in the breeze. Æolian pigeons, with a musical attachment fastened to their tails, flew around, filling the place with celestial harmony. Rockets of a thousand colors were sent off with a whizz, and fell in a golden shower from their dazzling bouquets.

All at once a noise was heard in the distance, from the direction of the *boulevard* Tiene-Men. There was shouting mingled with the shrill sound of trumpets; and then there was a lull, followed in a few moments by the same noise. It was coming nearer, and would soon reach the place where Le-ou's procession had halted.

Kin-Fo listened, and his friends, not knowing what to do, waited for the bride to enter the hotel; but, almost in a moment, the street was filled with a strange commotion, and the blasts from the trumpet increased as they came nearer.

"What can it be?" asked Kin-Fo. The expression of Le-ou's face changed, and a secret presentiment quickened the beating of her heart.

Immediately the crowd poured into the street, surrounding a herald in imperial livery, who was escorted by several tipaos. The herald, amid a general silence, uttered only these words, to which the bystanders responded with a low murmur, —

"Death of the dowager empress!

"Prohibition! prohibition!"

Kin-Fo understood. It was a blow that fell

directly on him, and he could not restrain an expression of anger.

Imperial mourning had just been decreed for the death of the widow of the late emperor. During the time appointed by law, every one was forbidden to shave his head, give public *fêtes* and theatrical performances, and celebrate marriages, and tribunals were not allowed to settle matters of justice.

Le-ou, who was broken-hearted, but courageous, put on a cheerful face at this misfortune, in order not to increase her *fiancé's* trouble, and, taking her dear Kin-Fo's hand, said, in a voice which tried not to betray her deep emotion, "Let us wait!"

The palanquin bore the young woman back to her house in Cha-Coua Avenue; the festivities were postponed, the tables cleared, the orchestra sent off; and the friends of the despairing Kin-Fo took leave, after having offered him their condolences.

They must, by no means, venture to disobey this imperial decree of prohibition.

Decidedly ill luck seemed to pursue Kin-Fo. But here was another opportunity granted him to profit by the lessons in philosophy which he had received from his former teacher.

Kin-Fo remained alone with Craig and Fry in the deserted apartments in the Hotel of Celestial Happiness, whose name now seemed to him a bitter sarcasm. The time of prohibition could be prolonged, according to the good pleasure of the Son

of Heaven. And he had expected to return immediately to Shang-hai, to settle his young wife in the sumptuous yamen which had become hers, and begin a new life in these new surroundings.

An hour later a servant entered, and handed him a letter, which a messenger had just brought. As soon as Kin-Fo saw the writing on the envelope, he recognized it, and could not restrain a cry.

The letter was from Wang, and this is what it said: —

"DEAR FRIEND, — I am not dead; but when you receive this letter I shall have ceased to live.

"I am dying, because I have not the courage to keep my promise. But do not feel disturbed: I have provided for every thing.

"Lao-Shen, a chief of the Tai-ping, my former companion, has your letter. He will have a steadier hand and heart than I to execute the horrible charge you made me accept. To him, therefore, will come the sum placed on your head; for I have made it over to him, and he will receive it when you are no more.

"Farewell! I precede you in death. We shall soon meet, dear friend. Farewell!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH KIN-FO, WHO IS STILL A BACHELOR, BEGINS TO TRAVEL AGAIN IN EARNEST.

KIN-FO'S situation was now a thousand times graver than before.

For Wang, in spite of having given his word, was powerless when it really came to the point of killing his former pupil. He knew nothing of the change in Kin-Fo's fortune, as the latter did not mention it in his letter. He had charged another with the fulfilment of his own promise, — a Tai-ping, a very formidable man, who would have no scruples about committing a mere murder for which he could not be held responsible; for did not Kin-Fo's letter assure him immunity? and, by filling Wang's position, would he not receive fifty thousand dollars?

"Ah, but I feel as if I were already having enough of it!" cried Kin-Fo, who began to be angry.

Craig and Fry heard of Wang's missive, and said to Kin-Fo, —

"Then your letter does not give the 25th of June as the last date?"

"Why, no!" he answered. "Wang can not and

ought not to date it till the day of my death. Now, this Lao-Shen can act when he pleases, without being limited to time."

"Oh," said Fry-Craig, "it is for his interest to perform the deed without delay!"

"Why?"

"That the sum placed on your head may be covered by the policy, and not be lost to him."

This argument was unanswerable.

"Very well," replied Kin-Fo. "It is still important that I should not lose an hour in getting back my letter, even if I pay the fifty thousand dollars guaranteed to this Lao-Shen."

"That is so," said Craig.

"That is true," added Fry.

"Now I must leave; for we must find this Tai-ping chief, who perhaps will be easier found than Wang."

While saying this, Kin-Fo walked up and down, unable to keep still a moment.

The series of thunderbolts which were hurled at him put him in an unusual state of excitement.

"I shall start on a journey," he said; "for I am going to find Lao-Shen. As for you, gentlemen, do whatever pleases you best."

"Sir," answered Fry-Craig, "the interests of the Centenary are in greater danger than ever; and to forsake you in the present circumstances would be failing in our duty. We shall not leave you!"

There was not an hour to lose. But, before all, it was necessary to know positively who this Lao-

Shen was, and the exact place in which he resided; and his notoriety was such, that this was not difficult.

This former companion of Wang in the insurrection of the Mang-Tchao had retreated to the northern part of China, beyond the Great Wall, in the neighborhood of the Gulf of Leao-Tong, which is an annex of the Gulf of Pe-che-lee. If the imperial government had not yet treated with him, as with several other rebel chiefs whom it could not conquer, it allowed him, at least, to work quietly in those territories beyond the Chinese frontiers, where Lao-Shen, resigning himself to a more modest *rôle*, followed the profession of highwayman.

Ah! Wang selected a good man, who had no scruples whatever; and a dagger-thrust more or less would not in the least disturb his conscience.

Kin-Fo and the two agents succeeded in obtaining full information about the Tai-ping; and, learning that he had been seen lately in the environs of Fou-Ning, — a small port in the Gulf of Leao-Tong, — resolved to go there without longer delay.

But they first informed Le-ou of all that had happened, which increased her anguish, and her beautiful eyes were dimmed with tears. She tried to dissuade Kin-Fo from going, urging that he would expose himself to inevitable danger, and that it would be better for him go away and hide somewhere, — to even leave the Celestial Empire, if necessary, and take refuge in some part of the

world where the ferocious Lao-Shen could not reach him.

But Kin-Fo told the young woman that he could not endure the prospect of living with death all the time threatening him, and at the mercy of such a rascal, to whom his death would bring a fortune. No: he must end the matter once for all. He and his faithful acolytes would leave that very day, would go to the Tai-ping, and pay for the deplorable letter in gold, and be back in Pekin before the decree of prohibition would be removed.

"Dear little sister," said Kin-Fo, "there is less cause to mourn for me now that our marriage is postponed a while; for, if it had taken place, it would have been a sad situation for you."

"If it had taken place," Le-ou replied, "I should have had the right, and it would have been my duty, to follow you, as I certainly should have done."

"No," said Kin-Fo: "I would rather suffer a thousand deaths than expose you to a single peril. Farewell, Le-ou! farewell!" And with tearful eyes he gently unclasped the arms that would have retained him.

That very day Kin-Fo, with Craig and Fry, followed by Soun, whose unlucky fate it was never to have a moment's rest, left Pekin, and proceeded to Tong-Tcheou. The journey took only an hour.

After thinking the matter over, they decided that the journey by land, through a rather unsafe province, presented very serious difficulties. If

the only object was to reach the Great Wall in the northern part of the capital, whatever dangers there might be in a journey of one hundred and sixty leagues, it would have been worth their while to have faced. The port of Fou-Ning was not in the north, but in the east; and, if they went there by sea, they would gain time, and be safe. They would reach it in four or five days, and, when there, could consider what was best to do next.

But would they find a ship about to sail for Fou-Ning? They must first ascertain this from the maritime agents of Tong-Tcheou.

On this occasion chance favored Kin-Fo, to whom misfortune had unremittingly dealt her blows. A boat, freighted for Fou-Ning, was waiting at the mouth of the Pei-ho.

There was no course but to take one of those fast steamboats which sail the river, descend as far as its estuary, and embark on the ship in question.

Craig and Fry asked for only an hour for their preparations; and they employed that hour in purchasing all the known life-preservers, from the primitive cork belt to the waterproof floating-suit of Capt. Boyton, for Kin-Fo was still worth two hundred thousand dollars. He was going on the water without paying an extra premium, because he insured against every risk. Now some catastrophe might happen. It was necessary to provide for every emergency; and, rest assured, this was done.

On the 26th of June, therefore, Kin-Fo, Craig-Fry, and Soun took passage on the "Pei-tang," and descended the Pei-ho. The curves of this river are so sharp, that a passage over it takes exactly twice as long as if it extended in a straight line from its mouth to Tong-Tcheou; but it has canals, and is therefore navigable for ships of quite heavy tonnage. Its business is also considerable, and much more important than that of the main route, which runs almost parallel to it.

The "Pei-tang" descended swiftly between the buoys of the channel, beating the yellowish waters of the river with its paddles, and stirring up the numerous canals on both shores. The high tower of a pagoda beyond Tong-Tcheou was soon passed, when it disappeared at the angle of a sharp turn.

At this distance the Pei-ho was not very broad, and flowed along between sandy banks, then by agricultural hamlets, with orchards and blooming hedges. Several important villages, scattered here and there in the midst of a wooded country, then appeared, — Matao, He-Si-Vou, Nane-Tsaë, and Yang-Tsoune, which the tide reaches.

Tien-Sing soon came in sight. Time was lost here; for it was necessary to have the eastern bridge opened, which unites the two shores of the river, and to wind about, not without some difficulty, among the hundreds of ships with which the port is crowded.

This is done with considerable difficulty, and costs more than one boat the cables which keep

her in the current. These were cut without regard to the damage, which caused confusion and a blockade of the boats, such as might have kept a port-officer busy, had there been one at Tien-Sing.

If we were to state that Craig and Fry, who kept a stricter watch than ever on this voyage, were never more than a footstep away from their charge, we really should not exaggerate.

Their chief anxiety was no longer concerning the philosopher Wang, with whom an arrangement might easily be made if he could be reached, but concerning Lao-Shen, the Tai-ping whom they did not know, on account of which he was all the more formidable.

They ought to feel safe, since they were going to him; but who could say that he had not already started in pursuit of his victim? How could they keep out of his way, or get word to him? Thus pondered the anxious Craig and Fry, who saw an assassin in every passenger on the "Pei-tang." They no longer ate or slept or lived.

If Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry were very seriously troubled, Soun, on his part, did not fail to be very anxious. The mere thought of going on the water made him seasick, and he grew paler and paler as the "Pei-Tang" approached the Gulf of Pe-che-lee. His nose grew sharp, and his mouth contracted; and yet the water was so quiet, that there was not the slightest motion to the boat.

What would it be when he had to endure the choppy waves of a narrow sea, which causes a boat to roll so much more?

"You have never been to sea?" Craig asked him.

"Never."

"And you don't like it?" said Fry.

"No."

"I command you to hold up your head," added Craig.

"My head?"

"And not to open your mouth," added Fry.

"My mouth?"

Thereupon Soun gave the two agents to understand that he preferred not to speak; and he walked off to the middle of the boat, and, as he went, cast over the already widening river that melancholy look of persons predestined to the rather ridiculous trial of seasickness.

The landscape in the valley which borders the river was of a different character. The right shore, which was steep, contrasted with the left, on whose long beach extended a line of foam left by the light surf. Beyond lay vast fields of sorghum, maize, wheat, and millet. Throughout China — a mother of a family who has so many millions of children to feed — there is not a patch of ground capable of cultivation that is neglected; and everywhere there are canals to water the ground, and a kind of rude water-machine of bamboo, which draws and gives out great quantities of water. Here and there, in the villages of yellowish mud, rose clusters of trees, among which were some old apple-trees fit to adorn a plain of Normandy.

Numerous fishermen were going to and fro along the shore, making use of sea-ravens instead of hunting-dogs, or rather fishing-dogs. At a sign from their master, these birds dive into the water, and bring up the fish which they cannot swallow, owing to a ring placed around their throat half-way up, which nearly strangles them. There were ducks, crows, ravens, magpies, and sparrow-hawks, which the screeching of the steam-boat sent flying from the tall grass.

Though the main route along the river appeared to be deserted, the travel on the Pei-ho did not lessen, and there were crowds of boats of every description sailing up and down. There were junks of war with mounted cannon, whose roofing formed a concave from fore to aft, and which were managed by a double row of oars, or by paddles worked by men; custom-house junks with two masts, with sails like those of a shallop, at an angle, and ornamented at stern and prow with heads or sails of fantastic figures; junks of commerce of considerable tonnage, huge shells, which, though loaded with the most precious products of the Celestial Empire, are able to brave the typhoon in the surrounding seas; travelling junks, being rowed or towed along according to the tide, and which are made for people who have time to lose; junks of the mandarins, small pleasure-yachts, towed by canoes; sampans of every kind, with sails of braided rushes, and the smallest of which, guided by young women with an oar in their

hands and a child on their back, deserve their name, which signifies three planks; and, finally, rafts, which are really floating villages with cabins and orchards and gardens, and formed of immense pieces of floating timber from some Mandshurian forest, the whole of which the woodmen must have felled.

But, as one went on, the villages became more scattered along the shore; and there were not more than twenty between Tien-Sing and Takou, at the mouth of the river. Dense clouds of smoke rose from the factories on its banks, and, mingling with those from the steamboat, obscured the atmosphere.

Evening came, preceded by the June twilight, which is very long in that latitude; and soon a succession of white sand-banks, in symmetrical order and of uniform design, were dimly outlined in the vague light: they were salt "mulous," taken from the neighboring salt-works. There rose the estuary of the Pei-ho, among arid plains, in a dreary landscape, which, M. de Beauvoir says, is nothing but sand, salt, dust, and ashes.

The next day, the 27th of June, before sunrise, the "Pei-Tang" came into port at Takou, near the mouth of the river.

At this place, on both shores, stand the Forts of the North and South, which are now in ruins, having been taken by the Anglo-French army in 1860. It was the scene of the glorious attack of General Collineau on the 24th of August of the

same year, the gunboats having forced an entrance into the river. There stretches a narrow band of territory, but partly settled, which bears the name of the French concession; and, beyond, one sees the funereal monument under which lie the officers and soldiers who died in those memorable combats.

The "Pei-tang" was not to pass the bar; and the passengers were obliged to land at Takou, which is already of considerable importance, and will be a thriving town if the mandarins ever allow a railroad to be constructed to unite it with Tien-Sing.

The ship bound for Fou-Ning was to sail that very day, and Kin-Fo and his companions had not an hour to lose. They therefore hailed a sampan, and a quarter of an hour later were on the "Sam-Yep."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN WHICH KIN-FO'S MARKET VALUE IS ONCE MORE UNCERTAIN.

A WEEK previous an American ship had come to anchor in the port at Takou. Chartered by the Sixth China and California Company, it had been charged to the account of the agency Fouk-Ting-Tøng, which is located in the Cemetery of Laurel Hill, San Francisco.

It is there that the Celestials who die in America, and are faithful to their religion, — which bids them rest in native earth, — await the day of their return.

This boat, whose destination was Canton, had, on the written authority of the agency, taken on board a cargo of two hundred and fifty coffins, seventy-five of which were to be landed at Takou, to be returned to the northern provinces.

This part of the cargo had been transferred from the American to the Chinese ship; and that very morning, the 27th of June, the latter was to set sail for the port of Fou-Ning.

It was on this boat that Kin-Fo and his companions had taken passage. They probably would not have selected it; but, as there were no other

ships leaving for the Gulf of Leao-Tong, they were obliged to embark on it. Then it was only a matter of three or four days' passage at most, and one very easy to make at that time of year.

The "Sam-Yep" was a sea-junk of about three hundred tons.

Some junks are of a thousand tons and over, drawing six feet only, which enables them to cross the bars of the rivers of the Celestial Empire. Too broad for their length, with a beam quarter the length of the keel, they are poor sailers for long distances, but turn round like a top, which gives them an advantage over ships of finer build. Their enormous yellow rudders are pierced with holes, — a practice which is thought highly of in China, but the effect of which is rather questionable. However this may be, these vast ships easily cut through the waters of rivers. It is said that one of these junks, freighted by a house in Canton, carried a cargo of tea and china to San Francisco under the command of an American captain. That they ride the sea well has therefore been proved; and competent judges agree that the Chinese make excellent sailors.

The "Sam-Yep," which was of modern build, reminded one of European ships in the model of her hull. Being neither nailed nor pegged, but made of bamboo sewed together, and calked with oakum and resin of Camboge, she was so stanch that she did not even possess a ship's pump; and her lightness made her float on the water like a

piece of cork. Having an anchor of very hard wood; a rigging made of the fibres of the palm-tree, which was remarkably flexible; with pliant sails managed from the deck, opening and shutting like a fan; and with two masts disposed like the main-mast and mizzen-mast of a lugger, without a bowsprit or jib, — she was well equipped for a short coasting voyage.

Certainly, no one on seeing the "Sam-Yep" would have imagined that its consignors had converted it this time into an enormous hearse.

Indeed, instead of chests of tea, bales of silk goods, and a stock of Chinese perfumery, the cargo we have spoken of had been substituted. But the junk had lost none of its lively colors: at its fore and aft cabins were suspended banners of many hues; at its prow there was a big glaring eye, which gave it the look of some gigantic marine animal; and at its mastheads the breeze unfurled the brilliant bunting of the Chinese flag. Two cannon stretched open their shining mouths above the railing, and reflected the sun's rays like a mirror; and useful engines they were in these seas, and were still infested by pirates. The whole appearance of the ship was gay, smart, and agreeable to the eye. And, after all, was it not the returning of exiles to their native land that the "Sam-Yep" was engaged in, — the returning of corpses, it is true, but of satisfied corpses?

Neither Kin-Fo nor Soun felt the slightest dislike at sailing under such circumstances; for they

were Chinamen. But Craig and Fry, like their American compatriots, who do not care about carrying this sort of a cargo, would no doubt have preferred some other ship of commerce; but the choice was not theirs to make.

A captain and six men composed the crew of the junk, and were sufficient to manage the very simple sails. The compass, it is said, was invented in China. This is possible; but the coasters never use it, and navigate by their judgment. This is what Capt. Yin, the commander of the "Sam-Yep" was going to do; and he did not expect, indeed, to lose sight of the shores of the gulf.

This Capt. Yin — a small man, with a smiling face, lively and loquacious — was the living demonstration of the insolvable problem of perpetual motion. He could not stay still in one place, and he was profuse in gestures. His arms, hands, and eyes spoke more than his tongue, which, however, was never at rest behind his white teeth. He drove his men about, was exacting of them, and swore at them; but he was a good seaman, was well acquainted with these coasts, and managed his junk as if he held it between his fingers. The high price which Kin-Fo paid for himself and companions was not likely to diminish his jovial humor. What a godsend were passengers who paid a hundred and fifty taels for a trip of sixty hours! especially if they were no more particular about their comfort and food than their travelling companions who were boxed up in the hold.

Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry were quartered after a fashion in the rear-cabin. Soun was in the one in the fore-part of the junk.

The two agents, still mistrustful, devoted themselves to a minute examination of the captain and crew, but found nothing suspicious in the manner of these worthy men. They could not be in league with Lao-Shen; for it was not within the limits of probability, since chance alone had placed this junk at the disposition of their charge; and how could chance be the accomplice of the too famous Tai-ping? Therefore the passage, with the exception of the dangers of the sea, would give them a few days' rest from their daily anxiety; and they left Kin-Fo more to himself.

The latter, however, was not sorry. He secluded himself in his cabin, and gave himself up to philosophizing as much as he pleased. Poor man! he had never known how to appreciate his happiness, or to value his former life in the yamen at Shang-hai, — a life free from care, and one that labor might have changed. Let him once get back his letter, and you would see if he had not profited by the lesson, and if the fool had not become a sage.

But would this letter ever be restored to him? Yes, no doubt, since he would pay a price for its return. It could only be a question of money to this Lao-Shen. Nevertheless it was necessary to capture him, and not be caught by him. This was the difficulty. Lao-Shen would keep informed

of all that Kin-Fo did, and Kin-Fo knew nothing of his movements: hence there was great danger for Craig-Fry's charge when he should land in the province explored by the Tai-ping. Every thing depended, then, on warning Lao-Shen; for evidently he would prefer to receive fifty thousand dollars from Kin-Fo living than fifty thousand dollars from Kin-Fo dead. That would save him a journey to Shang-hai, and a visit to the offices of the Centenary, which, perhaps, would not have been without its dangers, whatever might be the magnanimity of the government towards him.

Thus thought the thoroughly transformed Kin-Fo; and, as one may believe, the amiable young widow in Pekin filled the chief place in his plans for the future.

But what was Soun thinking of all this time?

Soun was thinking of nothing at all. Soun was stretched out in the cabin, paying his tribute to the malevolent divinities in the Gulf of Pe-che-lee. He could only collect a few ideas with which to curse his master, the philosopher Wang, and the bandit Lao-Shen. He felt benumbed at his stomach, — "Ai, ai, ya!" — benumbed in his ideas, and benumbed in his feelings. He did not even think of tea or rice. "Ai, ai, ya!" what ill-fated wind had driven him here? Oh! what a mistake he had made! He would a thousand times — yes, ten thousand times — rather not have entered the service of a man who was going to sea. He would willingly have given what was left of his pigtail to

be away from there. He would even rather have his head shaved, and be made a bonze. It was the yellow dog! the yellow dog, who was devouring his liver and bowels! "Ai, ai, ya!"

However, under the impetus of a fine south wind, the "Sam-Yep" passed within three or four miles of the low shores of the coast, which ran east and west. She passed Peh-Tang, at the mouth of the river of that name, not far from the place where the European fleet landed; then Shan-Tung, Tschiang-Ho, at the mouth of the Tau, and Hai-Ve-Tse.

This part of the gulf was becoming deserted. The maritime travel, which was quite important at the estuary of the Pei-ho, did not extend twenty miles beyond. In this part of the sea, around the blank horizon, only a few junks of commerce doing a small business in coasting, a dozen fishing-boats examining the fishing-grounds along the coast and the nets on the shore, were to be seen.

Craig and Fry observed that the fishing-boats, even those whose capacity did not exceed five or six tons, were armed with one or two little cannon.

To the remark which they made to Capt. Yin, the latter answered, rubbing his hands, —

"We have to frighten the pirates."

"Pirates in this part of the Gulf of Pe-che-lee!" cried Craig, in surprise.

"Why not here as well as anywhere else?" answered Yin. "Those worthies are not wanting in the seas of China."

And the excellent captain laughed, showing both rows of his dazzling teeth.

"You do not seem to dread them very much," observed Fry.

"Have I not my two cannon,—and jolly fellows they are!—who speak pretty loud when any one comes too near them?"

"Are they loaded?" asked Craig.

"Usually."

"Now?"

"No."

"Why not?" asked Fry.

"Because I have no powder on board," answered Capt. Yin quietly.

"Then of what use are the cannon?" said Craig-Fry, but little satisfied with this answer.

"Of what use?" cried the captain. "Why, to protect a cargo when it is worth the trouble,—when my junk is filled to the hatchway with tea or opium. But, with this cargo I have on board to-day, it is different."

"But," said Craig, "how do the pirates know whether your junk is worth attacking?"

"Then you fear a visit from those worthies?" answered the captain, turning round on his heel, and shrugging his shoulders.

"Yes, I do," said Fry.

"But you have no goods on board."

"That's so," added Craig; "but we have particular reasons for not desiring their visit."

"Well, have no anxiety," answered the captain.

"The pirates, if we meet any, will not give chase to our junk."

"Why not?"

"Because they will know what kind of cargo she has, as soon as they come in sight of her." And Capt. Yin pointed to a white flag at half-mast, which was being unfurled in the breeze. "A white flag in distress! the flag of mourning! These worthy men would not put themselves out to steal a cargo of coffins."

"Perhaps they will think you sail under the mourning-flag through prudence," observed Craig, "and will come on board to ascertain."

"If they come, we will receive them well," answered Capt. Yin; "and, when they have made their visit, they will go as they came."

Craig-Fry did not pursue the subject, but they shared the captain's unconcern in only a moderate degree. The capture of a junk of three hundred tons, even without a cargo, offered profit enough to the "worthy men" Capt. Yin spoke of for them to desire to make an attack upon her. But, whatever might come, they must resign themselves to their fate, and would only hope that the passage would be a safe one.

The captain, indeed, neglected nothing to bring himself good luck. At the moment he set sail, a cock was sacrificed in honor of the divinities of the sea, and on the mizzen-mast still hung the feathers of the unhappy member of the gallinaceous tribe. A few drops of his blood sprinkled over

the deck, and a small cup of wine thrown overboard, completed this propitiatory sacrifice. Thus consecrated, what had the junk "Sam-Yep" to fear under the command of the excellent Capt. Yin?

It is to be supposed, however, that the capricious divinities were not satisfied. Either the cock was too thin, or the wine was not made from the best Chao-Chigne vineyard; for a terrible squall struck the junk. Nothing had predicted it; for the day had been clear and bright, and the sky was swept of all clouds by a fine breeze. The clearest-sighted sailor could not have found indications that the "dog" was about to strike them.

Towards eight o'clock in the evening, the "Sam-Yep," still riding the waters safely, was preparing to double the cape, formed by the coast where it turns back to the north-east. Beyond it she could put on full sail, which was a very favorable manner of progressing for her build; and Capt. Yin, without presuming too much on his speed, expected to reach the coast of Fou-Ning in twenty-four hours.

Kin-Fo saw the hour for anchoring approach with a feeling of impatience that in Soun became fierce.

As for Fry-Craig, they made this remark: that, if in three days their charge should be able to get out of Lao-Shen's hands the letter which compromised his existence, it would be at the very time when the Centenary would no longer

have to trouble themselves about him. Indeed, his policy only covered him up to midnight of the 30th of June, since he had only paid a two-months' instalment into the hands of the Honorable Mr. Bidulph.

"All"— said Fry.

"Right!" added Craig.

Towards evening, at the time the junk reached the entrance of the Gulf of Leao-Tong, the wind veered suddenly to the north-east; then, passing north, two hours later it blew from the north-west.

If Capt. Yin had kept a barometer on board, it would have shown that the column of mercury had just lost, almost instantly, four or five millimetres. Now, this quick rarefaction of the air announced the approach of a typhoon,[1] whose movements were already indicated by the atmosphere. Also, if Capt. Yin had been acquainted with the observations of the Englishman Paddington and the American Maury, he would have tried to change his course, and steer to the north-east, in the hope of reaching a less dangerous area, outside of the centre of attraction of the whirling tempest.

But Capt. Yin never made use of the barometer, and was ignorant of the laws of cyclones. Besides, had he not sacrificed a cock? and would it not protect him from every danger?

[1] These whirling tempests are called "tornadoes" on the western coast of Africa, and "typhoons" in the China seas. Their scientific name is "cyclones."

Nevertheless this superstitious Chinaman was a good seaman, and proved it on this occasion. Instinctively he managed as a European captain would have done.

This typhoon was only a small cyclone, possessing, consequently, great rapidity of rotation, and an onward movement which exceeded one hundred kilometres an hour. It drove the "Sam-Yep" towards the east fortunately, because it carried the junk away from a coast which offered no shelter, and where it would inevitably have been wrecked in a very short time.

At eleven in the evening the tempest reached its maximum of force; but Capt. Yin, well aided by his crew, managed the junk like a true seaman. He no longer laughed, but preserved his *sang-froid*, and, holding the helm firmly in his hand, safely guided the light ship, which skimmed over the waves like a bird.

Kin-Fo had left the cabin, and, leaning on the railing, was watching the storm-driven clouds, which, descending, floated over the waters in shreds of mist. Then he gazed at the sea, which was white and luminous against the darkness of night, and whose waters the typhoon with gigantic force had raised above their natural level. Danger neither surprised nor frightened him: it was one of the series of emotions which a malevolent fate had let fall to his share. A passage of sixty hours without a tempest in midsummer was for the happy and fortunate; but he was no longer one of the happy.

Craig and Fry felt much more anxious, because of the market value of their charge. Certainly their lives were as valuable as that of Kin-Fo. If they died with him, they would no longer have to watch over the interests of the Centenary. But these conscientious agents forgot themselves, and thought only of doing their duty. To perish was very well; but it must be with Kin-Fo, be it understood, and after the 30th of June at midnight. To save that million was what Craig-Fry wished: that was all Fry-Craig thought of.

As for Soun, he had not a doubt that the junk was going to perdition; or rather, in his opinion, a man was on his way to perdition the moment he ventured on the perfidious element, even in the most beautiful weather. Ah! the passengers in the hold were not to be pitied! "Ai, ai, ya!" No rolling nor pitching for them. "Ai, ai, ya!" The unfortunate Soun wondered if in their place he would not still be seasick.

For three hours the junk was in extreme danger. One wrong move of the helm, and she would have been lost, for the sea would have swept her deck; and, if she could no more capsize than a pail, she might at least fill and sink. Maintaining her steadily in one direction through waves lashed by the whirling of the cyclone was not to be thought of; and the captain did not pretend to keep a reckoning of the distance traversed, or the route he had followed.

However, good fortune brought the "Sam-

Yep," without serious damage, into the centre of the atmospheric disk, which covers an area of a hundred kilometres. In it a space of two or three miles, with a calm sea, and a scarcely perceptible breeze, was found. It was like a peaceful lake in the middle of a storm-tossed ocean. By being driven there by the hurricane, under bare poles, the junk was saved. Towards three o'clock in the morning the fury of the cyclone abated as if by magic, and the angry waters around the little central lake gradually grew still.

But, when day came, the crew of the "Sam-Yep" searched the horizon in vain for land. Not a sign of shore was in sight. The waters of the gulf, which had retreated to the line where sea and sky met, surrounded it on every side.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH CRAIG AND FRY, URGED BY CURIOSITY, VISIT THE HOLD OF THE "SAM-YEP."

"WHERE are we now, Capt. Yin?" asked Kin-Fo, when all danger was over.

"I cannot tell exactly," answered the captain, whose face had resumed its wonted jollity.

"In the Gulf of Pe-che-lee, do you think?"

"Perhaps."

"Or in the Gulf of Leao-Tong?"

"Possibly."

"But where shall we land?"

"Wherever the wind sends us."

"And when?"

"That is impossible for me to say."

"A true Chinaman always keeps to the east, sir," resumed Kin-Fo, rather out of humor, and quoting a very popular saying in the Central Empire.

"On land he does, but not on sea," replied Capt. Yin, with a laugh that stretched his mouth from ear to ear.

"It is no laughing matter," said Kin-Fo.

"Nor one to cry about," replied the captain.

The truth is, that, although the situation had

nothing alarming in it, it was impossible for Capt. Yin to tell where the "Sam-Yep" lay. How could its course be reckoned without a compass in a wind which blew from every quarter? The junk, with its sails reefed, and almost beyond the control of the rudder, had been the plaything of the hurricane. Therefore there was reason for the captain to give such evasive answers, though he might have spoken in not quite so jovial a manner.

However, whether the "Sam-Yep" had been sent into the Gulf of Leao-Tong, or driven back into the Gulf of Pe-che-lee, she could not fail to round the cape at the north-west. Land must be found in that direction. It was a mere question of distance.

Capt. Yin, therefore, would have hoisted his sails, and steered his course by the sun, which was shining very brightly, if it had been possible to do so just then. It was not. A dead calm succeeded the typhoon; and not a current of air nor a breath of wind ruffled the sea, which was scarcely rippled by the undulations of a heavy swell, and gently rocked, without the faintest circle of outward motion. The junk rose and fell with the even swell of the sea, but did not stir from where it lay. A warm vapor hung over the waters; and the sky, which was so wild and angry during the night, seemed now resting from the fury of the elements, powerless to combat them. It was one of those dead calms whose duration cannot be calculated.

"This is fine!" said Kin-Fo to himself. "After the tempest has driven us about at will, it is the want of wind which now prevents us from returning to land."

Then, addressing the captain, he asked, —

"How long will this calm last?"

"Pray, sir, how can any one tell in this season?" answered the captain.

"Will it last for hours, or days?"

"Days, or perhaps weeks," answered Yin, with a smile of perfect resignation, which almost put his passenger in a rage.

"Weeks!" exclaimed Kin-Fo. "Do you think I can wait here for weeks?"

"But you will have to, unless our junk is towed along."

"To the devil with your junk and all on board! — myself first, since I was fool enough to take passage with you!"

"Sir," replied Capt. Yin, "do you wish me to give you two pieces of advice?"

"Let us hear them."

"The first is to go quietly to sleep, as I shall; which will be a very wise thing to do, after a whole night spent on deck."

"And the second?" asked Kin-Fo, whom the captain's calmness exasperated as much as did that of the sea.

"The second," answered Yin, "is to imitate my passengers in the hold. They never complain, but take the weather as it comes."

After these philosophical observations, which were worthy of Wang, the captain returned to his cabin, leaving two or three of the crew lying on deck.

For a quarter of an hour Kin-Fo walked to and fro from prow to stern, with his arms crossed, and beating a tattoo with his fingers in his impatience. Then casting a last look into the silent waste of waters, in the centre of which the junk was sailing, he shrugged his shoulders, and returned to the cabin, without having spoken a word to Fry-Craig.

The two agents, however, were there, leaning on the railing, and, according to their habit, sympathetically talking to each other without speaking. They heard Kin-Fo's questions and the captain's answers, without taking part in the conversation. Of what use would it have been for them to engage in it? and, above all, why should they complain about a delay which put their charge in a bad humor?

Indeed, what they lost in time they gained in security. Since Kin-Fo ran no danger on board, and since Lao-Shen's hand could not reach him, what more could they ask?

Besides, the time when their responsibility would end was approaching. Forty hours later, and the whole army of the Tai-ping might attack the ex-patron of the Centenary before they would risk a hair to defend him. Very practical were these Americans, — devoted to Kin-Fo as long as he

was worth two hundred thousand dollars to the Centenary, but absolutely indifferent to whatever might happen to him when he was only worth a sapeque.

Craig and Fry, reasoning thus, ate very heartily an excellent breakfast. They used the same dish and the same plate, and ate the same number of mouthfuls of bread and pieces of cold meat. They drank the health of the Honorable William J. Bidulph in an equal number of glasses of excellent Chao-Chigne wine. Each smoked half a dozen cigars, and again proved that they could be "Siamese twins" in tastes and habits, if not by birth.

Brave Yankees! they thought their troubles were nearly over.

The day passed without incidents or accidents. The calm continued; and there was the same quiet, cloudless sky, and nothing to indicate a change in the meteorological conditions. The sea, too, was as motionless as a lake.

About four o'clock Soun appeared on deck, staggering and stumbling like a drunken man, although he had never drunk so little in all his life as in the last few days.

After having been first violet, then indigo, then pale blue, then green, his face was now beginning to turn yellow again. When once on land, where it would assume its natural orange hue, if it should become red through anger, it would have passed successively and in natural order through all the colors of the solar spectrum.

Soun dragged himself along to the two agents, keeping his eyes partly closed, and not daring to look over the railing of the "Sam-Yep."

"Arrived yet?" he gasped.

"No" answered Fry.

"Shall we arrive?"

"No," answered Craig.

"Ai, ai, ya!" moaned Soun.

And in despair, without strength to say another word, he went and lay down at the foot of the main-mast, his frame being shaken by convulsive starts, which made his clipped braid wag like the little tail of a dog.

Capt. Yin, like an intelligent man, ordered the scuttles to be opened, that the hold might have an airing: and it was a wise precaution; for the sun would quickly absorb the dampness which two or three waves, coming on board during the typhoon, had made inside of the junk.

Craig-Fry, while walking on deck, stopped several times in front of the main-scuttle. A feeling of curiosity moved them to visit the funereal hold, and they descended through the hatchway which led to it. The sun made a large trapezium of light in a perpendicular line with the main-trap; but the fore and rear part of the hold remained in deep darkness. However, Craig-Fry's eyes soon became accustomed to it; and they could observe the stowage of the particular cargo of the "Sam-Yep."

The hold was not divided, as it is in the majority

of junks of commerce, by partitions running crosswise, and therefore gave one free passage from one end to the other, and was entirely reserved for the cargo, whatever it might be; for the cabins on deck sufficed for the quarters of the crew.

On each side of this hold, which was as clean as the antechamber of a cenotaph, the seventy-five coffins which were being conveyed to Fou-Ning were piled. Being firmly stowed, they could neither be displaced by sudden jolts or pitching, nor in any way endanger the safety of the junk.

A passage that was left between the double row of biers allowed one to go — now guided by the broad light from the opening in the two traps, and then coming into comparative darkness — from one end of the hold to the other.

Craig and Fry, silent as if they were in a mausoleum, went along through this passage, looking around them with considerable curiosity.

There were coffins of every shape and dimension, some of them large and some small. Of these emigrants whom the necessities of life had driven beyond the Pacific, some had made a fortune in California diggings, and in the mines of Colorado and Nevada; but they were few in number, alas! Others, who reached there poor, returned poor. But all were coming back to their native country equal in death. A dozen coffins of rare wood, ornamented in the most fanciful and expensive Chinese fashion, and others simply made of four boards rudely put together and painted yellow, made up the ship's cargo.

Whether rich or poor, each coffin bore a name, which Fry-Craig could read as they passed, — Lien-Fou of Yun-Ping-Fou, Nan-Loou of Fou-Ning, Shen-Kin of Lin-Kia, Luang of Ku-Li-Koa, etc.

It was not possible to confuse them; for each corpse, being carefully labelled, would be sent to its address, and would wait in orchards, fields, and plains for the final hour of burial.

"How nicely arranged!" said Fry.

"Nicely packed," answered Craig.

They spoke as they would of the goods of a merchant from the docks of a consignor in New York or San Francisco.

Craig and Fry, having reached the farther end of the hold, in the darkest part towards the prow, stopped, and looked down the passage-way, which was as distinctly defined as the path in a cemetery.

Having finished their exploration, they were preparing to return to the deck, when a slight sound was heard, which attracted their attention.

"A rat!" said Craig.

"A rat!" repeated Fry.

It was a poor cargo for these rodents. One of millet, rice, or maize would have suited them much better.

However, the sound continued. It was heard about as high as a man's head, and somewhere to starboard, and consequently must come from the upper row of coffins. It was not a grating of teeth, but surely a grating of claws or nails.

"F-r-r-r! F-r-r-r!" said Craig and Fry.

The sound did not cease.

And the two agents, moving nearer, listened, and held their breath. It was certain that this scratching came from one of the coffins.

"Can they have put a Chinaman in one of these coffins while in a state of lethargy" — said Craig.

"And who would wake up after a passage of five weeks?" concluded Fry.

The two agents placed their hands on the suspicious-looking coffin, to assure themselves that there was a movement inside.

"The devil!" said Craig.

"The devil!" said Fry.

The same idea that some near danger threatened their charge had naturally come to both; and, withdrawing their hands very slowly, they felt the lid being cautiously raised.

Craig and Fry, being men whom nothing can surprise, stood motionless, and, as they could see nothing in the profound darkness, listened with some anxiety.

"Is it you, Couo?" said a voice that was repressed through excessive prudence.

Almost at the same moment, from another coffin that was opened a crack, another voice whispered, —

"Is it you, Fa-Kien?"

And the following words were rapidly exchanged: —

"Is it to be to-night?"

"To-night."

"Before the moon rises?"

"In the second period."

"And our companions?"

"They are warned."

"Thirty-six hours in a coffin! I have had enough of it."

"And I too much."

"But Lao-Shen commanded" —

"Hush-h!"

At the name of the famous Tai-ping, Craig-Fry, masters of themselves as they were, could not restrain a slight movement. Suddenly the lids of the oblong boxes closed, and perfect silence reigned in the hold of the "Sam-Yep."

Fry and Craig, crawling on their knees, reached the part of the passage which was lighted by the main-hatchway, and ascended the steps. A moment afterwards they stopped in the rear of the cabin, where no one could hear them.

"Dead people who talk" — said Craig.

"Are not dead," answered Fry.

One name had revealed every thing, — Lao-Shen!

It was plain to be seen that the companions of this formidable Tai-ping had smuggled themselves on board. Could one doubt that it was with the complicity of Capt. Yin, his crew, and the consignors in the port of Takou who had put this funereal cargo on board? No: after having disembarked from the American ship which brought

them from San Francisco, the coffins had remained in the dock for two nights and two days. A dozen or twenty, or more perhaps, of these pirates of Lao-Shen's band, taking possession of the coffins, had tumbled out the corpses, in order to take their places. But, in making this move at the instigation of their chief, they knew that Kin-Fo was to take passage on board the "Sam-Yep." Now, how could they have learned this?

This subject was a perfectly dark one, and it was inopportune to try to throw light on it at this time.

It was certain, however, that Chinese of the worst kind had been on board the junk ever since the departure from Takou, and that the name Lao-Shen had just been spoken by one of them, and that Kin-Fo's life was in imminent danger.

This very night, between the 28th and 29th of June, would cost the Centenary two hundred thousand dollars, when, fifty-four hours later, the policy not being renewed, they would not have to pay any thing to the beneficiaries of this ruinous patron.

It would show little knowledge of Fry and Craig to suppose that they would lose their heads in this grave situation. Their course was decided upon at once: they must insist on Kin-Fo's leaving the junk before the second period, and they would fly with him.

But how would they escape? Take possession of the only boat on board? Impossible! It was a heavy canoe, which required the efforts of all the crew to lift from the deck, and lower to the sea.

Now Capt. Yin and his accomplices would not help them do this. Therefore they must resort to some other measure, whatever risks they might run.

It was then seven in the evening. The captain, who had shut himself up in his cabin, had not again made his appearance. He was evidently waiting for the hour agreed upon with Lao-Shen's companions.

"There is not an instant to lose," said Fry-Craig.

No, not one: the two agents could not have been in greater danger if they had been sailing out to sea on a fire-ship to which the match had been applied.

The junk seemed to be left to drift; and only one sailor was in the prow, and he was asleep.

Craig and Fry pushed open the door in the rear-cabin, and crept up to Kin-Fo. He was fast asleep, but he awoke when they touched him.

"What is wanted of me?" he asked.

In a few words the situation was explained to him; but his usual courage and coolness did not forsake him.

"Let us throw all those make-believe corpses into the sea," he exclaimed.

A grand idea, but absolutely impossible to carry out, on account of the complicity of Capt. Yin with his companions in the hold. "What is to be done, then?" he asked.

"Dress yourself in this," answered Fry-Craig. Saying which, they opened one of the packages they had put on board at Tong-Tcheou, and pre-

sented their charge with one of those wonderful nautical rubber suits invented by Capt. Boyton.

The bundle contained three other suits, with the different articles which made them first-class life-preservers.

"Very well," said Kin-Fo. "Go find Soun."

A moment after, Fry brought in Soun, thoroughly stupefied. He had to be dressed, to which he submitted mechanically, expressing his thoughts only in heart-rending "Ai, ai, yas."

At eight o'clock Kin-Fo and his companions were ready; and one would have taken them for four seals from the frozen seas preparing to make a plunge. But it must be confessed that the seal Soun would not have given a very favorable idea of the wonderful suppleness of these marine mammifera, because he was so lank and flabby in his floating garments.

It was already growing dark in the east, and the junk was drifting in perfect stillness over the calm surface of the waters.

Craig and Fry pushed open one of the port-holes which closed the windows in the rear-cabin, and the top of which opened above the crowning of the junk. Soun, whom they lifted up without ceremony, was shoved through the port-hole, and dropped into the sea. Kin-Fo immediately followed him; then Craig and Fry, gathering up the necessary apparatus, jumped in after.

And no one would suspect that the passengers of the "Sam-Yep" had just left the deck.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHICH DOES NOT FINISH WELL, EITHER FOR CAPT. YIN, THE COMMANDER OF THE "SAMYEP," OR FOR HER CREW.

CAPT. BOYTON'S apparatus consists simply of a rubber suit, made up of pantaloons and a tunic with a hood. From the nature of the material the suit is perfectly water-proof, but would not prevent the wearer suffering from the cold during a long immersion, were there not a lining between which and the rubber a certain amount of air can be introduced.

This air serves two ends, — the one, to maintain the apparatus on the water; the other, to prevent contact with it, and to guarantee against cold: so that the wearer may remain in the water for an indefinite time.

It is unnecessary to say that the joints are perfectly tight and strong.

The pantaloons, which extend to and cover the feet, are fastened to a steel belt at the waist, large enough to give free play to the body, and at their feet have stout soles. The tunic, which is also secured to the belt, has a solid collar, and terminates in a hood; while the latter, by means of an

elastic band, adheres hermetically to the forehead, cheeks, and chin, and nothing is seen of the face but the eyes, nose, and mouth. To the tunic several rubber tubes are fastened, which introduce the air, and permit of its regulation, according to the density desired. Thus one can plunge at will to the neck or only to the waist, or even take a horizontal position.

In short, perfect freedom of action and motion and absolute safety are insured.

Such is the apparatus which has brought so great honor to its ingenious and bold inventor; and its real utility will be proved in accidents at sea.[1]

There are various accessories, — a water-tight bag, to be suspended by a strap, and containing necessary utensils; a stout stick, to be set in a socket at the feet, and to carry a small lateen-sail; and a light paddle, either for an oar or rudder, according to circumstances.

Kin-Fo, Craig-Fry, and Soun, thus equipped, were now floating on top of the waves. Soun, being pushed by one of the agents, permitted the apparatus to bear him along; while, with a few moves of the paddle, all four soon outdistanced the junk.

The night, which was still very dark, favored

[1] TRANSLATOR'S NOTE. — This chapter was submitted by the translator to Capt. Boyton. While in France he became well acquainted with the author, who had ample opportunity to test this invention; and his description of it, Capt. Boyton states, is excellent.

their progress. But, if Capt. Yin or any of his sailors had come on deck, they could not have seen the fugitives; besides, no one would have supposed that they could leave the deck in this fashion, and the rascals shut up in the hold could not know of it till the last moment.

"In the second period," the make-believe corpse in the last coffin said; that is, about the middle of the night.

Kin-Fo and his companions, therefore, had a few hours in which to escape; and in that time they hoped, with the wind in their favor, to gain a mile over the "Sam-Yep."

Indeed, a breeze now began to ripple the mirror-like waters, but still so lightly that they could only depend on the paddle to take them out of reach of the junk.

In a few moments Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry were so well accustomed to their apparatus, that they worked it instinctively without once hesitating about the manner of moving, or on the position to take, in the soft, yielding element. Soun soon recovered his wits, and found himself incomparably more at his ease than on board of the junk. His seasickness had suddenly ended; for the sensation caused by the rolling and pitching of a boat is wholly unlike that given by the sea-swell when one is in it up to his waist, which Soun attested with great satisfaction.

But, if Soun was no longer sick, he was terribly afraid. He thought that possibly the sharks had

not gone to their rest, and he instinctively doubled up his legs as if he were about to be snapped up; and, to speak frankly, a slight degree of anxiety was not out of place in the situation.

Thus Kin-Fo and his companions, whom mischance continued to place in the most unnatural situations, floated along, and, when using the paddle, lay in an almost horizontal position, resuming the perpendicular when resting.

An hour after they left the "Sam-Yep," she was half a mile behind, sailing with the wind. Then they stopped, leaned on their paddles, which were lying flat on the water, and held council in a very low voice.

"That rascal of a captain!" cried Craig, to start a conversation.

"That scoundrel of a Lao-Shen!" replied Fry.

"Do they astonish you?" said Kin-Fo, like a man whom nothing can surprise.

"Yes," answered Craig, "for I cannot understand how those wretches found out that we took passage on the junk."

"It is indeed incomprehensible," added Fry.

"But it is of little consequence," said Kin-Fo, "since we have escaped."

"Escaped!" answered Craig. "We cannot say that; for, so long as the "Sam-Yep" is in sight, we shall not be out of danger."

"Well, what can we do?" asked Kin-Fo.

"Use all our strength, and get so far that we shall not be seen at daybreak," answered Fry.

And, inflating his rubber suit with a sufficient quantity of air, he rose out of the water as far as his waist. He then drew his bag in front, opened it, and took out a flask, and a glass which he filled with refreshing brandy, and passed to Kin-Fo, who needed no urging, but emptied it to the last drop. Craig-Fry followed his example, as did Soun, who was not forgotten.

"How does that suit you?" asked Craig.

"Better," answered Soun, when he had swallowed the brandy. "If we could only have a bite of something to eat!"

"To-morrow," said Craig, "we shall breakfast at daybreak, and have several cups of tea."

"Cold!" cried Soun, making up a face.

"Warm!" answered Craig.

"Can you make a fire?"

"Yes."

"But why wait till to-morrow?" asked Soun.

"Would you have our fire betray us to Capt. Yin and his accomplices?"

"No, no!"

"Well, then, wait until to-morrow."

Thus these good men chatted as if they were really in their own houses. The slight swell made them rise up and down in a singularly comical manner — first one, then the other — at the caprice of the waves, like the hammers on a keyboard under the touch of a pianist.

"The breeze is springing up," observed Kin-Fo.

"Let us set sail," replied Fry-Craig. And they

were preparing to make a mast of their stick on which to hoist their sail, when Soun uttered a cry of fear.

"Hold your tongue, you fool!" said his master. "Would you betray us?"

"But I thought I saw" — whimpered Soun.

"What?"

"A monstrous animal coming near me, — a shark!"

"You are mistaken, Soun," said Craig, after carefully scanning the surface of the water.

"But I thought I felt" — continued Soun.

"Hold your tongue, you coward!" said Kin-Fo, placing one hand on his servant's shoulder. "Even if you feel your leg being snapped off, I forbid you to cry out, or" —

"Or," added Fry, "we will thrust our knives into his rubber suit, and send him to the bottom of the sea, where he can cry out as much as he pleases."

The unhappy Soun was not at the end of his troubles. He was almost frightened out of his senses, but dared not utter a word. If he did not now wish himself back on the junk, with the passengers in the hold, and even seasick, he would before long.

As Kin-Fo observed, the wind was rising; but it was only one of those light breezes which generally die away at sunrise: nevertheless they must profit by it to get as far as possible from the "Sam-Yep." When Lao-Shen's companions dis-

covered that Kin-Fo was no longer in his cabin, they would probably start in search of him; and, if he were in sight, the canoe would make it very easy to overtake him: therefore they must, at all costs, be far distant before dawn.

The breeze was blowing from the east, so that to whatever latitude the junk might be driven by the hurricane, sailing in a westerly direction from the Gulf of Leao-Tong, Pe-che-lee, or even from the Yellow Sea, it would probably be going towards the shore where boats of commerce on their way to the mouth of the Pei-ho, and fishing-crafts which sail along the coast day and night might be found: therefore the chances of being rescued would increase with their number. If, on the contrary, the wind should come from the west, and the "Sam-Yep" should be carried farther south than the coast of Corea, Kin-Fô and his companions would have no hope.

Before them spread the wide sea; and, if they should reach the shores of Japan, they would arrive as corpses incased in their floating rubber suits.

But, as we have said, the breeze would probably die away by sunrise; and it was necessary to profit by it, and get safely out of sight.

It was now about ten o'clock in the evening, and the moon would rise a little before midnight, and there was not a moment to lose.

"Let us start," cried Fry-Craig.

They got under sail in a moment. Nothing was easier; for to the right foot of the rubber suit a

socket was fastened, in which the stick which served as a mast was set.

Kin-Fo, Soun, and the two agents first stretched themselves out on their backs; then, by bending their knee, brought one foot round, and drove the stick into the socket, first moving the halyards of the little sail to the end of it. As soon as they resumed the horizontal, the stick, making a right angle with the line of their bodies, stood perpendicularly.

"Hoist the sail!" cried Fry-Craig.

And each, leaning his right hand on the halyards, raised the upper corner of the lateen-sail to the end of the mast.

The halyard was fastened to the steel belt of the suit, and the sheet was held in the hand; while the breeze, swelling the four jibs, bore away the little flotilla of aquatic voyagers with the waters rippling around them.

Ten minutes later each was managing the apparatus with perfect safety and ease, and sailing close to the other. One would have taken them for enormous sea-gulls flitting lightly over the water with outspread wings.

Their navigation was greatly aided by the state of the sea, in which there was no surf or tide or waves to disturb the quiet swell.

Two or three times the awkward Soun, forgetting Fry-Craig's advice, tried to turn his head, and swallowed a few mouthfuls of the bitter liquid; but he soon relieved himself of them. This did

not trouble him, however, so much as the dread of meeting a band of ferocious sharks. They tried to make him understand that he ran less risk in a horizontal than in a vertical position. Indeed, the position of a shark's mouth obliges it to turn round to snatch its prey; and this movement is not easy when it wishes to seize an object which is floating horizontally. Besides, it is said, that, if these voracious animals attack inert bodies, they are less likely to attack those in motion. Soun, therefore, was told to keep perpetually moving; and we leave the reader to judge whether he did so.

The voyagers sailed about an hour in this fashion. It was not necessary for them to go faster or slower: if they went slower, they would not get away from the junk fast enough; if they went faster, they would be fatigued as much by the tension of their little sail as by the disturbed motion of the waves.

Craig-Fry then gave orders to halt. The sheets were slackened, and the flotilla stopped.

"Five minutes' rest, if you please, sir," said Craig, addressing Kin-Fo.

"Certainly."

All sat upright, with the exception of Soun, who wished to remain lying "for the sake of prudence," and kept constantly kicking about.

"Another glass of brandy?" called Fry.

"With pleasure," said Kin-Fo.

A few swallows of the refreshing liquor was all

that was needed; for hunger did not yet torment them. They dined an hour before leaving the junk, and could wait till the next morning; and they needed nothing to warm them, for the wadding of air between their bodies and the water saved them from being chilled. The normal temperature of their bodies had not diminished one degree since their departure.

Was the "Sam-Yep" still in sight?

Craig and Fry turned around to see; Fry taking a night-glass from his bag, and looking searchingly along the eastern horizon.

There was nothing to be seen; not even one of those almost invisible shadows cast by boats on the dark background of the sky. The night was dark, with a slight mist; and hardly a star was to be seen, while the planets were clouded in the firmament. But, most probably, the moon, which would soon show her half-disk above the horizon, would clear the fog.

"The junk is far behind," said Fry.

"The rogues are still sleeping," answered Craig, "and will not profit by the breeze."

"Are you ready?" asked Kin-Fo, tightening his sheet, and again throwing his sail to the wind.

His companions did the same, and all renewed their first course with a stronger breeze.

They sailed westward; and, consequently, the moon, rising in the east, could not shine directly in their faces, but cast its first rays on the opposite shore. In that place, if they watched the

horizon, perhaps a sharp outline, luminous in the moonlight, would appear, instead of a circle, clearly defined by sky and sea. The aquatic voyagers would not be mistaken, for it would be the shore of the Celestial Empire; and, wherever they might approach, there would be no risk. Its coast was clear, and its surf was light; and it would be a safe place for a landing. When once on dry land, they could make their final plans.

At nearly quarter of twelve white streaks were faintly defined in the mist at the zenith, as the moon's quarter rose from the water's edge.

Neither Kin-Fo nor his companions turned round. The breeze, which was freshening and dispersing the vapor in mid-heaven, carried them on with considerable speed; and they felt that a larger space was clearing around them.

At the same time the constellations became more distinct, the wind blew away the fog, and there was an agitation of the water at the heads of the voyagers. The moon, paling from copper-red to silver-white, soon lighted the whole sky.

Suddenly a good round American oath escaped from Craig's mouth.

"The junk!" he cried.

All stopped.

"Down with the sails!" said Fry.

In a moment the four jibs were reefed, and the sticks taken from their sockets.

Kin-Fo and his companions, resuming a vertical position, looked behind them.

There stood the "Sam-Yep," with all sails flying, less than a mile away, — a dark outline against the bright horizon.

It was really the junk! She had set sail, and was now profiting by the breeze. Capt. Yin, no doubt, had discovered Kin-Fo's disappearance without understanding how he succeeded in escaping. He was in league with his accomplices in the hold, and, taking the risk, set out in pursuit; and in less than a quarter of an hour he would have Kin-Fo, Soun, Craig, and Fry in his power.

But had they been seen in the brightness the moon cast around them on the water? Perhaps not.

"Lower your heads," said Craig, who clung to this hope.

They understood him, and, letting out the air through the tubes of their rubber suits, sank beneath the water till only their heads were visible.

There was nothing to do but wait in perfect silence.

The junk was approaching very swiftly, its tall sails casting two broad shadows over the water.

Five minutes later the "Sam-Yep" was only half a mile off. Above the railing the sailors were seen moving to and fro, and the captain was aft at the helm.

Was he sailing in pursuit of the fugitives,

or only following the wind? They could not tell.

Suddenly shouts and cries were heard, and a mass of men appeared on deck. The noise increased.

Evidently there was a combat between the make-believe corpses escaped from the hold and the crew.

But what was the cause? Were not all these rogues, sailors, and pirates in league with each other?

Kin-Fo and his companions could distinctly hear horrible oaths on one side, and cries of grief and despair on the other, which ceased in a few moments.

Then a violent commotion of the waters alongside the junk showed that bodies were being cast into the sea.

No! Capt. Yin and his crew were not the accomplices of the bandits under Lao-Shen. On the contrary, those poor men had been surprised and massacred. The rogues who had concealed themselves on board — no doubt with the aid of the freighters at Takou — had no other design than to take possession of the junk in behalf of the "Tai-ping," and certainly could not have known that Kin-Fo was on board.

Now, if he were seen, and should be captured, neither he, Fry, Craig, nor Soun could expect mercy from these wretches.

The junk came nearer and nearer, and finally

reached them; but, by unexpected good fortune, the shadow from her sails fell on them.

They dived for a moment; and, when they again appeared on the surface, the junk had passed without seeing them, and was scudding along with a foaming wake.

A corpse floated behind, and the current bore it nearer the aquatic voyagers. It was the dead body of the captain, with a dagger in his side, and the broad folds of his robe still floating on the surface. Then he sank, and disappeared in the depths of the ocean.

Thus perished the jolly Capt. Yin, the commander of the "Sam-Yep."

Ten minutes later the junk disappeared in the west; and Kin-Fo, Fry-Craig, and Soun were again alone.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH IT WILL BE SEEN TO WHAT DANGERS MEN ARE EXPOSED WHO USE CAPT. BOYTON'S NAUTICAL APPARATUS.

THREE hours later the first pale rays of dawn were faintly defined on the horizon, and day soon appeared, and the sea could be seen in all its extent.

The junk was no longer visible, having quickly outdistanced the aquatic voyagers, who could not compete with her in speed. They followed the same route to the west, being driven by the same wind; but the "Sam-Yep" must now be more than three leagues off: therefore there was nothing to be feared from those who commanded her.

But this danger being avoided did not render the situation less grave. Indeed, the sea was deserted: there was not a ship nor a fishing-boat in sight, and no appearance of land at the north or east, and nothing which indicated the proximity of a coast. Were these the waters of the Gulf of Pe-che-lee, or of the Yellow Sea? On this point there was no certainty.

A few puffs of wind still stirred the surface of the waters, and they must not lose them. The

direction which the junk followed proved that land would come in sight in the west sooner or later, and that there it should be sought.

The aquatic voyagers then decided to set sail again, after having taken refreshments; for their stomachs claimed their due, and a ten-hours' voyage, such as they had made, rendered them imperative.

"Let us breakfast," said Craig.

"Plentifully," added Fry.

Kin-Fo made a sign of assent, and Soun expressive movements of the jaws, whose meaning was unmistakable. The famished man no longer thought about the danger of being himself devoured: quite the contrary.

The water-proof bag was then opened; and Fry took out several articles of food of excellent quality, such as bread and preserves, and also some utensils for the table, and whatever was necessary to appease hunger and thirst.

Of the hundred dishes which figure in the ordinary *menu* of a Chinese dinner, there lacked ninety-eight, to be sure; but still there was enough to refresh these four men, who under these circumstances would not be hard to please. They ate a hearty breakfast. The bag contained two days' provisions, and they would reach land in two days or never.

"But we feel hopeful," said Craig.

"Why do you feel hopeful?" asked Kin-Fo in a slightly ironical tone.

"Because luck is returning to us," answered Fry.

"Ah! you think so?"

"Certainly," answered Craig. "Our greatest danger was the junk, and we have succeeded in getting out of the way of it."

"Never, sir, since we have had the honor of being attached to your person, have you been safer than here," added Fry.

"All the Tai-pings in the world" — said Craig.

"Could not reach you," said Fry.

"And you float beautifully" — added Craig.

"For a man who weighs two hundred thousand dollars!" added Fry.

Kin-Fo could not help laughing.

"If I float," he replied, "I owe it to you, gentlemen; for, without your aid, I should now be where poor Capt. Yin is."

"And we also!" replied Fry-Craig.

"And I — and I!" cried Soun, swallowing an enormous piece of bread with a good deal of effort.

"No matter," resumed Kin-Fo: "I know what I owe you."

"You owe us nothing," answered Fry, "because you are a patron of the Centenary" —

"Life-Insurance Company" —

"Capital guaranteed: twenty million dollars."

"And we hope" —

"That it will have nothing to owe you."

Kin-Fo was really very much touched by the

devotion of the agents, whatever their motive might be, and he did not conceal his feelings.

"We will talk about this again," he added, "when Lao-Shen shall have returned the letter, which Wang unfortunately gave up."

Craig and Fry looked at each other, and an almost imperceptible smile played around their lips. Evidently the same thought was passing through the mind of each.

"Soun!" said Kin-Fo.

"Sir?"

"The tea?"

"Here it is," answered Fry.

Fry had his reasons for answering in Soun's place; for the latter would have said that tea was out of the question.

But to think that the two agents were embarrassed by so small a matter was not to know them. Fry then drew from the bag a small utensil, which is the indispensable complement of the Boyton apparatus. Indeed, it can serve as a beacon when it is dark, a fireplace when it is cold, and a cooking-stove when one wishes a warm drink.

Nothing is simpler. It is a tube five or six inches long, fastened to a metallic receptacle, provided with an upper and a lower plug, and all encased in a cork *plaque* in the manner of those floating thermometers used in bathing-houses.

Fry placed this utensil on the surface of the water, which was perfectly level.

With one hand he opened the upper plug, and with the other the lower one, which was fastened to the immersed part; and immediately a bright flame burst out at the end, giving a very perceptible heat.

"Here is the cooking-stove," said Fry.

Soun could hardly believe his eyes.

"What! do you make fire with water?" he cried.

"With water and phosphuret of calcium," answered Craig.

Indeed, this apparatus was constructed in a way to utilize a singular property of the phosphuret of calcium, — a compound of phosphorus, which in contact with water produces phosphuretted hydrogen. Now, this gas burns spontaneously in air, and neither the wind nor the rain nor the sea can extinguish it. It is used to light life-buoys, which, when they fall, bring the phosphuret of calcium in contact with the water; and a long flame instantly bursts out, which enables the man who falls into the sea to find it in the night, and sailors to come directly to his aid.[1]

While the hydrogen was burning at the end of the tube, Craig held a tea-kettle over it, filled with fresh water, which he took from a little flask in his bag. In a few minutes the water boiled, and Craig poured it into a teapot, which contained several pinches of excellent tea; and this time

[1] M. Seyferth and M. Silas, the keeper of records of the embassy from France to Vienna, are the inventors of this life-buoy, which is used on every ship-of-war.

Kin-Fo and Soun drank it in the American fashion, — without waiting for an invitation. This warm drink made an agreeable ending to this breakfast, served on the surface of the water in "such" a latitude and "such" a longitude. It only needed a sextant and a chronometer to determine the position within a few seconds. These instruments will one day be added to Capt. Boyton's bag of utensils, and shipwrecked men will no longer run the risk of being lost on the ocean.

Kin-Fo and his companions, now thoroughly rested and refreshed, unfurled the little sails, and resumed their course to the west, which had been agreeably interrupted by this morning repast.

The breeze still kept up for twelve hours, and the aquatic voyagers made good headway with the wind behind them; and they only needed to guide their course from time to time by a slight move of the paddle. Being gently and slowly drawn along in this horizontal position, they were somewhat inclined to fall asleep; but it was necessary to resist this inclination, which would have had inconvenient results. Craig and Fry, in order not to succumb to it, lighted a cigar, and smoked, like the dandy bathers in a swimming-school. Several times the voyagers were troubled by the gambols of several marine animals, which caused the unhappy Soun the greatest fear. Fortunately they were only inoffensive porpoises; and these "clowns" of the sea had innocently come to take a good look at the singular beings who were float-

ing in their element, and who seemed to be mammifera like themselves, but no sailors.

What a curious spectacle these porpoises were, as they approached in clusters, darting along like arrows, and tinting the waters with their emerald hues! They bounded five or six feet out of the waves, making a kind of perilous leap, which proved the suppleness and strength of their muscles. Ah! if the aquatic voyagers could have cut through the waters with that rapidity, greater than that of the fastest ships, they would soon have reached land. It made one long to fasten himself to one of these fish and be towed along. But what somersaults and plunges they made! It would be much better to depend only on the wind to help one's self; for, although it was slower, it was infinitely more available.

However, towards noon the breeze died away; and only an occasional capricious whiff swelled the small sails one moment, to leave them to fall inert the next.

The sheet slackened in the hand that held it, and there was no motion felt beneath their feet or head.

"A complication," said Craig.

"Grave one," answered Fry.

They stopped a minute, took in the sail, took down the mast; and each, placing himself again in a vertical position, looked at the horizon.

The sea was still deserted, neither a sail nor the smoke of a steamer against the sky being in

sight. A hot sun had dried up the mists, and cleared the air. The temperature would have seemed warm even to men not clad in a double envelope of rubber.

Hopeful as Fry-Craig declared themselves as to the result of this adventure, they could not help feeling anxious. Indeed, they could not calculate the distance they had traversed for about sixteen hours; but what was more and more inexplicable was, that nothing — neither ship of commerce nor a fishing-boat — gave evidence of the proximity of the shore.

Fortunately Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry were not men to despair before the journey's end, if that time should ever come. They still had enough provisions for one day, and there was no indication of bad weather.

"Use your paddle," said Kin-Fo.

This was the signal for departure; and the voyagers resumed their westward route, — sometimes on their backs, sometimes on their faces.

They did not go fast: for working the paddles soon fatigues arms not accustomed to the motion, and they often had to wait for Soun, who kept behind, and began his jeremiades again. His master called, abused, and threatened him; but Soun, no longer fearing for what was left of his braid, which was protected by the thick rubber hood, let him talk on, and the fear of being left behind was enough to keep him near.

About two o'clock several birds appeared.

They proved to be sea-gulls, which are swift-winged, and fly far out to sea; so that one could not infer from their presence that the coast was near. Nevertheless this was considered a favorable sign.

An hour later the aquatic voyagers fell into a network of sea-weed, from which they had considerable trouble to extricate themselves.

They were as securely caught as fishes in the meshes of a net, and had to take knives, and cut their way out of the marine thicket.

This caused the loss of a full half-hour, and an expenditure of strength that might have been better utilized.

At four o'clock the little floating band stopped again, very much fatigued, it must be confessed. Quite a fresh breeze had arisen; but it blew from the south, which gave some cause for anxiety. Indeed, the voyagers could not navigate under the head-wind, like a boat whose keel keeps it from drifting. If they unfurled their sails, they ran the risk of being carried northward, and of losing a part of what they had gained in the west. Besides, a heavy swell was felt; and the waves dashing against them, as the tide rolled in, made the situation much more painful.

They made quite a long halt, and made use of it not only to take rest, but to strengthen themselves by attacking the provisions again. This dinner was less cheerful than their breakfast. Night would return in a few hours. The wind

was starting up; and now what course should they take?

Kin-Fo, leaning on his paddle, frowning and more irritated than disturbed at this spitefulness of fate, did not utter a word. Soun gaped incessantly, and sneezed like a mortal threatened with a terrible influenza.

Craig and Fry felt that they were questioned by their companions; but they did not know what to answer.

Finally a very happy chance furnished a reply. Shortly before five o'clock, Craig and Fry, simultaneously pointing to the south, exclaimed, —

"A sail!"

Indeed, three miles away, and going with the wind, a boat appeared under full sail. Now, with the wind behind her, to continue in the direction she was taking, she would probably pass within a short distance of the place where Kin-Fo and his companions were resting. There was but one thing to do, — to block the way by rising perpendicularly to meet her.

The aquatic voyagers therefore proposed to do this, and their strength returned. Now that safety was once more in their hands, as it were, they would not let it escape.

The direction of the wind no longer allowed them to make use of the small sails; but the paddles would suffice, the distance to be gone over being comparatively short.

The boat was rapidly becoming larger to the

sight, under the breeze, which was growing stronger. It was only a fishing-boat, and its presence here evidently indicated that the coast could not be very far away; for Chinese fishermen rarely venture out to sea.

"Now, then, dash ahead bravely!" cried Fry-Craig, paddling with all their strength.

They were not obliged to rouse their companions' ardor; for Kin-Fo, lying flat on the water, sped along like a race-boat; and, as for Soun, he really surpassed himself, and kept ahead of them all, he was so afraid of being left behind.

But they must make half a mile in order to reach the waters in the vicinity of the boat. Besides, it was broad daylight; and, if the voyagers did not come near enough to be seen, they could at least make themselves heard.

But would not the fishermen take flight when they saw these singular marine animals, and heard them shouting to them? That would be very serious.

However, they could not afford to lose a single moment; and they struck out with their arms, the paddles beat the crest of the waves with the utmost rapidity, and the distance was perceptively lessening, when Soun, who was still ahead, gave a terrible cry:—

"A shark! a shark!"

This time Soun was not mistaken.

About twenty feet off, two appendages were seen above the water. They were the fins of a

voracious animal peculiar to these seas, — the tiger-shark, which is fully worthy of its name; for nature has given him the twofold ferocity of the shark and the tiger.

"Your knives!" cried Fry and Craig.

They were the only arms they had at their disposal, and perhaps were insufficient. Soun, as one may judge, stopped instantly, and turned round, and sailed off as fast as he could. But the shark caught sight of the voyagers, and started for them. His enormous body, spotted and striped with green, was seen for a moment through the transparent waters. He measured from sixteen to eighteen feet in length, and was a monster. He made a dive at Kin-Fo first, turning half round, as if to snap him up.

Kin-Fo did not in the least lose his presence of mind, but, just as the shark was about to attack him, gave it a blow on his back with his paddle, and with one vigorous effort sailed quickly beyond.

Craig and Fry approached, ready for attack or defence. The shark dived a moment, and then came to the surface, opening his mouth, which was like a large pair of shears provided with four rows of teeth.

Kin-Fo wished to try once more the exploit which had just been successful; but his paddle came into contact with the animal's jaw, which cut it close off. The shark, which was partly lying on its side, then threw itself on its prey.

Immediately streams of blood gushed out, and the sea was tinged with red.

Craig and Fry had increased their blows on the animal; and, hard as its skin was, their long-bladed American knives succeeded in cutting it.

The monster's jaws then opened and closed with a horrible noise, while its tail beat the water frightfully. Fry received a blow from its tail, which hit him in the side, and threw him back ten feet.

"Fry!" cried Craig, in tones of the deepest grief, as if he had received the blow himself.

"Hurrah!" answered Fry, returning to the onset. He was not wounded; for his rubber cuirass deadened the blow.

The shark was again attacked, and with great fury. He turned round and round; but Kin-Fo succeeded in driving the broken end of his paddle into his eye, and tried, at the risk of being cut in two, to hold it still while Fry and Craig tried to strike the heart. It is to be supposed that the two agents succeeded; for the monster, after making a last struggle, sank in a wave of blood.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Fry-Craig, waving their knives.

"Thank you," was all that Kin-Fo said.

"You are welcome!" Craig replied. "Do you think we would let a mouthful of two hundred thousand dollars go to this fish?"

"Never!" added Fry.

And Soun? Where was Soun? Ahead this

time, and already very near the boat, which was not three cables' length away. The coward had fled by the help of his paddle, but came near getting into trouble.

The fishermen saw him; but they could not imagine that under this sea-dog accoutrement there was a human being, and therefore they prepared to fish for him as they would for a dolphin or seal. As soon as it was within reach, a long rope with a strong harpoon at the end was flung into the sea.

The harpoon struck Soun above the belt of his garment, and, as it slipped off, tore it from the middle of the back to the neck.

Soun, being now kept up only by the air in the lining of the pantaloons, tumbled over, and stood with his head in the water, and legs in the air.

Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry, just arriving, took the precaution to hail the fishermen in good Chinese.

Imagine the fright of these good men. Seals which talked! They would put on sail, and depart with utmost speed.

But Kin-Fo re-assured them, and made himself and his companions known as men and Chinese like themselves. Shortly after, these terrestrial mammifera found themselves on board.

But Soun was left behind. They hauled him in with a hook: and raising his head above the waters, while one of the fishermen took hold of

the end of his braid, they drew him up; but the whole braid came off in his hand, and the poor devil plunged into the water again.

The fishermen then threw a rope around him, and succeeded, after some trouble, in pulling him into the boat.

He was hardly on deck, and had barely time to spurt the salt water out of his mouth, when Kin-Fo approached him, and said in a severe tone,—

"Then it was false?"

"But if it had not been," answered Soun, "should I, who knew your habits, ever have been able to enter your service?"

And he said this so comically that all burst out laughing.

These fishermen were from Fou-Ning, and less than two leagues off was the very port Kin-Fo wished to reach.

That same evening, about eight o'clock, he landed there with his companions; and, taking off Capt. Boyton's rubber suits, all four resumed the appearance of human beings.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH CRAIG AND FRY SEE THE MOON RISE WITH EXTREME SATISFACTION.

"Now to the Tai-ping!"

These were the first words that Kin-Fo spoke the next morning, the 30th of June, after a restful night, which he owed to the two heroes of these singular adventures.

They were at last on the scene of Lao-Shen's exploits, and the battle was about to begin in earnest; and would Kin-Fo come out of it a conqueror? Yes, no doubt, if he could capture the Tai-ping; for he would pay whatever price Lao-Shen might exact, in order to get his letter. But he would certainly not be the conqueror if a dagger should strike him in the bosom before he even had time to bargain with Wang's ferocious substitute.

"To the Tai-ping!" answered Fry-Craig, after silently consulting each other with their eyes.

The arrival of Kin-Fo, Fry-Craig, and Soun in their singular costume, and the manner in which the fishermen had taken them from the sea, would tend to create a certain excitement in the little port of Fou-Ning. It would be difficult to escape public curiosity; and they were therefore escorted to

the inn in the evening, where, thanks to the money kept in Kin-Fo's belt and Craig-Fry's bag, they procured more suitable clothing. If Kin-Fo and his companions had not been surrounded by so many people on the way to the inn, they might have seen a certain Celestial, who kept close in their footsteps; and their surprise, no doubt, would have been great if they had seen him keep watch at the door of the hotel all night. And their mistrust would surely have been excited if they had seen him in the same place in the morning.

But they saw and suspected nothing, and had no reason to be surprised when this suspicious-looking person came up to them as they were about leaving the inn, and offered his services as a guide.

He was a man about thirty years old, who seemed to be very honest.

However, some suspicion was awakened in the minds of Craig-Fry, and they questioned him.

"Why," they asked him, "do you offer yourself as a guide? and where do you propose to escort us?"

There was nothing more natural than this double question, and nothing more natural than the answer that was made.

"I suppose," said the guide, "that you intend to visit the Great Wall, as do all travellers who come to Fou-Ning. I am acquainted with the country, so I offer to be your guide."

"My friend," said Kin-Fo, interposing, "before making any arrangement, I would like to know if the province is safe?"

"Very safe," answered the guide.

"Have you ever heard any thing in the country round about of a certain Lao-Shen?" asked Kin-Fo.

"Lao-Shen the Tai-ping?"

"Yes."

"Indeed there is nothing to fear from him on this side of the Great Wall," said the guide. "He would not venture on the imperial territory; for his band wanders around outside the Mongolian provinces."

"Does any one know where he is at present?" asked Kin-Fo.

"He was heard from lately in the environs of Tsching-Tang-Ro, only a few leagues from the Great Wall."

"And what is the distance from Fou-Ning to Tsching-Tang-Ro?"

"About fifty leagues."

"Well, I accept your services."

"To take you to the Great Wall?"

"To take me to Lao-Shen's encampment."

The guide could not restrain a certain movement of surprise.

"You will be well paid," added Kin-Fo.

The guide shook his head, as if to signify that he did not wish to pass the frontier.

"As far as the Great Wall, will do very well," he answered, "but not beyond; for that would be risking one's life."

"Set a price on yours, and I will pay it."

"Very well," replied the guide.

Kin-Fo, turning round to the two agents, added, —

"You are free, gentlemen, not to accompany me."

"Where you go," — said Craig.

"We will go," said Fry.

The patron of the Centenary had not yet ceased to be worth two hundred thousand dollars to them.

After this conversation the agents seemed to be perfectly easy in regard to the guide.

But, to believe them, one would meet the greatest dangers beyond that barrier which the Chinese have raised against the incursions of Mongolian hordes.

The preparations for departure were immediately made. They did not ask Soun if it would be agreeable to him to make the journey; for he could not help himself.

Conveyances, such as carriages and wagons, were absolutely wanting in the little town of Fou-Ning, nor were there horses or mules; but there was a certain number of Mongolian camels, which are used for business purposes by the natives of Mongolia. These adventurous traders, driving their innumerable flocks of sheep with long tails, travel in caravans on the road from Pekin to Kiatcha. They thus establish communication between Asiatic Russia and the Celestial Empire. However, they only ventured across these long steppes in numerous and well-armed troops.

"They are a ferocious, haughty race, to whom the Chinaman is only an object of scorn," says M. de Beauvoir.

Five camels, with their very primitive harness, were purchased. They loaded them with provisions, supplied themselves with arms, and set out on their journey under the lead of the guide.

But these preparations had consumed much time, and they would not be ready to leave before one o'clock in the afternoon; but in spite of this delay the guide relied on reaching the foot of the Great Wall before midnight. There he would organize an encampment; and the next day, if Kin-Fo persevered in his imprudent resolution, they would pass the frontier.

The country in the environs of Fou-Ning was elevated. Clouds of yellow sand rolled in thick columns along the roads, which ran between cultivated fields; and one still saw the productive territory of the Celestial Empire. The camels went at an even and steady, though not rapid, pace. The guide preceded Kin-Fo, Soun, and Craig and Fry, who were perched between the two humps of their steeds. Soun greatly approved of this style of travelling, and would have gone to the end of the world in this position.

Though the journey was not fatiguing, the heat was great. The most curious effects of a *mirage* were produced in the atmosphere, that was heated by the reflection from the ground. Vast watery plains, as large as a sea, were seen at the horizon,

but soon vanished, to the great satisfaction of Soun, who feared some new voyage was to be his fate.

Although this province was situated at the extreme limits of China, it must not be supposed that it was deserted. The Celestial Empire, vast as it is, is still too small for its constantly increasing population; and therefore the inhabitants are numerous even on the border of the Asiatic desert.

Men were working in the fields; and Tartar women, who could be recognized by their red and blue dresses, attended to out-door work. Flocks of yellow sheep with long tails — which Soun could not look upon without envy — were grazing here and there under the eye of the black eagle. Woe to the unlucky ruminant which went astray! for these birds of prey are formidable and carnivorous, and wage a terrible war on sheep, rams, and young antelopes, and even serve as hounds to the Kirghis in the steppes of Central Asia.

Flocks of feathered game were flying about everywhere, and a gun would not have been idle in this portion of the territory; but the true hunter would not have looked favorably upon the nets, traps, and other methods of destruction, worthy of a poacher at most, and which covered the ground between the furrows of wheat, millet, and maize.

Kin-Fo and his companions travelled on through the whirlwinds of this Mongolian dust, and stopped

neither in the shade at the roadside, nor at the few scattered farms in the province, nor in the villages which they could here and there descry by the funereal towers which were erected to the memory of heroes of Buddhic legends. They marched in file, leaving the lead to their camels, which are accustomed to walk one behind the other, while a red bell at their neck keeps time with their measured step.

Under these circumstances no conversation was possible. The guide, who was but little of a talker by nature, kept ahead of the small party, looking around the country in a circle whose extent was constantly diminished by the thick dust. He never was at a loss as to the road to take, even where a landmark was wanting at some crossings. So Fry-Craig, no longer feeling mistrustful of him, gave all their vigilance to the precious patron of the Centenary. Through a very natural sentiment, they felt their anxiety increase as they approached the end; for, at any moment, without being able to warn him, they might find themselves in the presence of a man, who, with one well-applied blow, would make them lose two hundred thousand dollars.

As for Kin-Fo, he found himself in that state of mind in which the memory of the past predominates over the anxieties of the present and future. He reviewed his life for the past two months, and the continuance of his misfortunes did not fail to disturb him very seriously; for, since the day

when his San Francisco correspondent sent him the news of his pretended failure, had he not had a series of truly extraordinary ill luck? and would there not be some compensation between the second part of his life and the first, whose advantages he had been so foolish as to disregard? Would this succession of adverse experiences end by his getting possession of the letter which was in Lao-Shen's hands, if perchance he should succeed in getting it away from him without striking a blow? Would the amiable Le-ou, by her presence, love, and charming gayety, ever be able to drive away the evil spirits which pursued him? Yes: the memory of the past was returning to him, filling his thoughts and disturbing him. And Wang! he certainly could not blame him for having tried to keep his oath; but Wang the philosopher, the constant guest in the yamen at Shang-hai, would no longer be there to teach him wisdom.

"You will fall!" cried the guide just then, whose camel had just knocked against that of Kin-Fo, who came near tumbling in the middle of his revery.

"Have we arrived?" he asked.

"It is eight o'clock," answered the guide, "and I intend to halt for dinner."

"And afterwards?"

"Afterwards we will resume our journey."

"It will be dark."

"Oh, don't fear that I shall lead you astray! The Great Wall is not twenty leagues from here, and we must let our beasts stop to take breath."

"Very well," answered Kin-Fo.

On the road, not far distant, stood a forsaken ruin; and through a winding ravine near by ran a little brook, in which the camels could quench their thirst.

While waiting, and before it was quite dark, Kin-Fo and his companions seated themselves in the ruins, and ate a lunch with an appetite sharpened by their long journey.

The conversation, however, was not spirited. Once or twice Kin-Fo directed it to Lao-Shen, and asked the guide who this Tai-ping was, and if he knew him. The guide shook his head as if he were not positive, and avoided answering as much as possible.

"Does he ever come into the province?" asked Kin-Fo.

"No," answered the guide; "but Tai-pings from his band have passed the Great Wall several times, and it would not be well to meet them. May Buddha save us from the Tai-pings!"

At these responses, which the guide evidently did not know were considered very important by his questioner, Craig and Fry looked at each other, and frowned, drew out their watch, consulted it, and finally shook their heads.

"Why should we not remain quietly here till daylight?" said they.

"In these ruins!" exclaimed the guide. "I prefer the flat country, where there is less danger of being surprised."

"But we agreed to be at the Great Wall this evening," answered Kin-Fo. "I must be there, and I will."

This was said in a tone that admitted of no discussion. Even Soun, who was already half dead with fear, dared not protest.

The repast being over, — it was nearly nine o'clock, — the guide rose, and gave the signal to depart.

Kin-Fo then went towards his steed, and Craig and Fry followed him.

"Sir," said they, "have you decided to place yourself in the hands of Lao-Shen?"

"I have fully decided," answered Kin-Fo: "I must have my letter at any price."

"It is playing for a very high stake," they resumed, "to go into the Tai-ping's camp."

"I have not come thus far to draw back now," replied Kin-Fo. "You are free not to follow me if you do not wish."

The guide lighted a little pocket-lantern, and the two agents approached, and consulted their watch a second time.

"It would certainly be more prudent to wait till to-morrow," they urged.

"Why so?" answered Kin-Fo. "Lao-Shen will be as dangerous to-morrow or day after to-morrow as he is to-day. Let us start."

"Let us start," repeated Fry-Craig.

The guide heard the last part of this conversation, and several times during the halt, when the

two agents wished to dissuade Kin-Fo from going on, a certain look of dissatisfaction was seen on his face; and now, when he saw them renewing their objections, he could not restrain a gesture of impatience.

This did not escape Kin-Fo, who was quite determined not to yield an inch. But his surprise was extreme, when the guide, as he assisted him to mount his beast, leaned over, and whispered in his ear, —

"Beware of those two men!"

Kin-Fo was about to ask him to explain his words; but the guide motioned to him to be silent, gave the signal for departure, and the little band ventured out into the country through the dark night.

Had a slight mistrust entered the mind of Fry-Craig's charge? could the unexpected and inexplicable words of the guide counterbalance with him their two months' devotion? No, certainly not! And yet Kin-Fo wondered why Fry-Craig had advised him to put off his visit to the Taiping's camp, or to give it up. Was it not in order to join Lao-Shen that they suddenly left Pekin? Was it not also for the interest of the Centenary's two agents that their charge should get possession of that absurd and compromising letter? Their objections, therefore, were incomprehensible.

Kin-Fo did not show the feelings which disturbed him, and took his place again behind the guide. Craig-Fry followed him, and they travelled thus for two long hours.

It must have been near midnight when the guide, stopping, pointed to a long black line in the north, which was faintly defined against the some what lighter background of the sky. Behind this line rose a number of hills, silvered by the rising moon, which was not yet above the horizon.

"The Great Wall!" said the guide.

"Can we cross it this evening?" asked Kin-Fo.

"Yes, if you insist upon it," answered the guide.

"I do."

The camels having stopped, the guide said, "I am going to reconnoitre the pass. Wait for me here." And he left.

Just then Craig and Fry approached Kin-Fo.

"Sir!" said Craig.

"Sir!" said Fry.

"Have you been satisfied with our services during these two months that we have watched over your person by the orders of the Honorable William J. Bidulph?"

"Perfectly satisfied."

"Would you please sign this little paper, sir, to show that you have nothing but praise to say of our able and loyal services?"

"A paper!" answered Kin-Fo, somewhat surprised at the sight of a leaf torn from a note-book, and which Craig presented him.

"This certificate," said Fry, "will perhaps bring us a compliment from our employer, and, no doubt, extra pay."

"Here is my back, which you can use as a desk, sir," said Craig, bending over.

"And here is the ink which will enable you to give us this written proof of your kind opinion," said Fry.

Kin-Fo laughed, and signed the paper.

"And now," he asked, "why all this ceremony in this place, and at this hour?"

"In this place," answered Fry, "because it is our intention not to accompany you farther."

"At this hour," added Craig, "because in a few moments it will be midnight."

"And what matters the hour to you?"

"Sir," continued Craig, "the interest that our insurance company felt for you" —

"Will cease in a few moments," added Fry.

"And you can kill yourself" —

"Or have yourself killed" —

"As much as you please!"

Kin-Fo, without understanding a word, looked at these two agents, who spoke in the most amiable tone. At this moment the moon rose above the horizon, and its first beam shone on them.

"The moon!" cried Fry.

"And to-day is the 30th of June!" cried Craig.

"It rises at midnight" —

"And your policy not being renewed" —

"You are no longer insured by the Centenary."

"Good-evening, Mr. Kin-Fo!" said Craig.

"Mr. Kin-Fo, good-evening!" said Fry.

And the two agents, turning about, soon were lost to sight, leaving their client stunned.

The steps of the camels which bore away these

perhaps rather too practical Americans were hardly out of hearing, when a troop of men, led by the guide, sprang upon Kin-Fo, who tried in vain to defend himself; and on Soun, who tried in vain to run away.

A moment later the master and valet were shut up in the dungeon of one of the abandoned bastions in the Great Wall.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHICH THE READER MIGHT HAVE WRITTEN HIMSELF, IT ENDS IN SO SURPRISING A WAY.

THE Great Wall — which is like a Chinese screen four hundred leagues long — was built in the third century by the Emperor Tisi-Chi-Houang-Ti, and extends from the Gulf of Leao-Tong, whose waters bathe its two wharves, to the Kan-Sou, where it is reduced to the proportions of a wall of ordinary size. It is an uninterrupted succession of double ramparts, defended by bastions and towers, fifty feet high and twenty feet broad, whose foundation is of granite and the upper part of brick, and which boldly follow the undulating outline of the mountains between Russia and China.

Where it approaches the Celestial Empire, the wall is in rather a poor condition, but presents a better appearance towards Mandshuria, and its battlements become magnificent stone ornaments. This long line of fortifications is not protected either by guards or cannon; and Russians, Tartars, and the Kirghis, as well as the Sons of Heaven, can freely pass through its gates. The screen no longer protects the Western frontier, not even

from that fine Mongolian dust which the north wind sometimes brings to its capital.

It was under the postern of one of these deserted bastions that Kin-Fo and Soun, after a wretched night passed on the straw, disappeared the next morning, escorted by a dozen men, who could only belong to Lao-Shen's band.

As for the guide, he had vanished. But it was no longer possible for Kin-Fo to deceive himself; for it was not chance that brought this traitor in his way, and the ex-patron of the Centenary had evidently been expected by the wretch. His hesitation to venture beyond the Great Wall was only a *ruse* to turn aside suspicion; for he probably belonged to the Tai-ping, and could only have acted by his orders.

Kin-Fo had no doubts on this subject after he questioned one of the men, who seemed to direct his escort.

"You are taking me, no doubt, to the camp of Lao-Shen, your chief?" he said.

"We shall be there in less than an hour," replied the man.

But for what purpose had Wang's pupil come here? To seek the philosopher's substitute? Well, they would take him where he wished to go; and, whether he went of his own free will or by compulsion, he could have no cause to find fault. He must leave that to Soun, whose teeth were already chattering, and who felt as if his head were spinning on his shoulders.

Kin-Fo, who was always phlegmatic, had his own plans in regard to the adventure, and followed his escort; for at last he would have a chance to negotiate for his letter with Lao-Shen. That was his sole desire, and now every thing was progressing favorably.

After crossing the Great Wall, the little party followed, not only the main road to Mongolia, but the steep paths which enter the mountainous part of the province at the right. They walked on for an hour as fast as the ascent would permit. Kin-Fo and Soun were closely surrounded, and could not have escaped, and, moreover, did not once think of doing so.

In an hour and a half both guards and prisoners perceived the partial ruins of an edifice round the corner of a wall.

It was an ancient bonze temple, a curious monument of Buddhic architecture, erected on a brow of the mountain. But in this remote part of the Russian frontier of China, in the centre of this deserted country, one could but wonder what kind of worshippers ventured to frequent this temple; for it was very dangerous to pass through these defiles, which were favorable places for spies and ambuscades.

If the Tai-ping Lao-Shen established his camp in this mountainous part of the province, one must confess he chose a locality worthy of his exploits.

To Kin-Fo's question, the chief escort answered that Lao-Shen really lived in this bonze temple.

"I wish to see him this very moment," said Kin-Fo.

"You shall see him this very moment," replied the chief.

Kin-Fo and Soun, whose arms had previously been taken from them, were led into a broad vestibule, which formed the atrium of the temple. There stood nearly twenty armed men, who looked very picturesque in their bandit costume, but whose ferocious countenances did not exactly inspire confidence.

Kin-Fo passed deliberately between this double row of Tai-pings. As for Soun, they had to push him forward by main force.

This vestibule, at the farther end, opened on a staircase in the thick wall, and the steps descended to quite a depth in the mountain.

This evidently indicated that a sort of crypt was hollowed out under the principal part of the bonze temple; and to one who did not hold the thread to these winding, underground passages, it would have been very difficult, not to say impossible, to reach them.

After descending about thirty steps, then going forward twenty, by the smoky light of their guides' torches, the prisoners reached the centre of a vast hall, which was dimly lighted in the same way.

It was indeed a crypt. Massive pillars, ornamented by those hideous heads of monsters which belong to the grotesque fauna of Chinese mythology, support elliptic arches, whose mouldings

were again united to the keystone of the heavy vaults.

A low murmur was heard in this subterranean hall on the arrival of the two prisoners; it was not deserted; for a crowd filled it to its darkest recesses, and this crowd was made up of the whole Tai-ping band, who had assembled there for some mysterious ceremony.

At the end of the crypt, on a broad stone platform, stood a very tall man, who appeared to be the president of a secret tribunal; and three or four of his companions, who stood motionless at his side, appeared to fill the place of assistants.

The tall man made a sign, and the crowd immediately moved aside, and made way for the prisoners.

"Lao-Shen!" was all that the chief escort said, as he pointed to the personage who was standing.

Kin-Fo went forward, and entered at once upon his business, like a man who is determined to bring it to an end.

"Lao-Shen," said he, "you have a letter in your hands which was sent to you by your former companion, Wang. This letter is now useless, and I have come to ask you to return it to me."

At these words, spoken in a firm voice, the Tai-ping did not even move his head, but seemed like a bronze statue.

"For what sum will you give up the letter?" resumed Kin-Fo.

He waited for an answer that did not come.

"Lao-Shen!" said Kin-Fo, "I will draw on whatever banker you please, and in whatever city you choose, an order that will be honorably paid, without giving any anxiety to the business-man whom you may send for it."

The sombre Tai-ping preserved the same icy silence, which did not promise well.

Kin-Fo continued, emphasizing his words, —

"What sum shall I make this order? I offer you five thousand taels."

There was no answer.

"Ten thousand taels."

Lao-Shen and his companions were as mute as the statues in this strange bonze temple.

Kin-Fo could not help feeling angry and impatient; for his offers deserved some sort of answer.

"Do you not understand me?" he said, addressing the Tai-ping.

Lao-Shen, this time deigning to lower his head, gave him to understand that he thoroughly comprehended.

"Twenty thousand taels! Thirty thousand taels!" cried Kin-Fo. "I offer you what the Centenary would pay you if I were dead. I will double the sum! triple it! Speak! Is it enough?"

Kin-Fo, whom this mute put beside himself, approached this speechless group of men around the Tai-ping, and, crossing his arms, said to him, —

"For what price, then, will you sell me that letter?"

"For no sum whatever," the Tai-ping finally

answered. "You offended Buddha in scorning the life he gave you, and Buddha will be avenged. Not till you face death will you know the value of the privilege of being in the world, — a privilege so long unacknowledged by you."

And having said this, in a tone which admitted of no reply, Lao-Shen beckoned to his men; and Kin-Fo, who was seized before he could defend himself, was garroted and carried off. A few moments later he was shut up in a kind of cage, which was hermetically closed, and was intended to take the place of a palanquin.

Soun, the unfortunate Soun, in spite of his cries and entreaties, had to submit to the same treatment.

"This means death," said Kin-Fo to himself. "Well, so be it! One who has despised life deserves to die."

But his death, although it appeared inevitable, was not so near as he thought. He could not imagine what horrible torment this cruel Tai-ping was reserving for him.

Hours passed; and Kin-Fo, still imprisoned in his cage, felt himself lifted, and then carried along in some sort of vehicle. The jolts, and the noise of the horses' hoofs, with the rattling of his escorts' weapons, left him no doubt on this subject. They were carrying him far away. But where? It would be useless for him to try to discover.

Seven or eight hours after he started, Kin-Fo

felt that the chair had stopped, and that the box in which he was shut up was being lifted in men's arms; and soon a quieter motion succeeded the joltings on the road.

"Am I on a ship?" he wondered.

Very decided motions of rolling and pitching, and a revolving kind of motion, confirmed him in the idea that he was on a steamer.

"Death in the waves!" he thought. "So be it! They spare me tortures which might be worse. Thanks, Lao-Shen!"

But twice twenty-four hours again passed by; and twice each day a little food was put into his cage through a small sliding trap, though the prisoner could not see the hand that brought it, or receive an answer to his questions.

Ah! Kin-Fo, before leaving this life which heaven made so beautiful to him, had sought emotions. He did not wish his heart to cease to beat without once being thrilled. Well, his wishes were granted, and far beyond his expectations.

However, although he had sacrificed his life, he wished to die in the light of heaven. The thought that this cage might any moment be cast into the sea was horrible. To die without having seen the light of day again, nor poor Le-ou, who filled his every thought, was too hard.

Finally, after a lapse of time which he could

not reckon, it seemed to him that his long sail suddenly came to an end.

The revolving motion suddenly ceased. The ship which bore his prison stopped, and Kin-Fo felt that his cage was lifted again.

Now was his last hour; and the condemned man could hope for nothing, but that his sins might be forgiven.

A few moments elapsed, then years, then centuries, when, to his great astonishment, Kin-Fo felt sure that his cage rested on solid ground once more.

All at once his prison opened, and he was seized by the arms of some one, who immediately placed a large bandage over his eyes, and pulled him out; and then, firmly held by his guards, he walked a few steps, and was then told to halt.

"If I must die at last!" he cried, "I will not ask you to spare a life that I have not known how to use wisely, but allow me at least to die in the light, since I am not afraid to look death in the face."

"Granted," said a grave voice. "Let it be as the prisoner wishes." And the bandage which covered his eyes was removed.

Kin-Fo then looked eagerly around him.

Was he the victim of a dream? There was a table, sumptuously served, and before it sat five guests, smiling, and appearing to await his presence before beginning their repast. Two vacant places seemed to be left for two guests.

"Is it you? you? My friends! my dear friends! Is it really you whom I see here?" cried Kin-Fo, in accents it would be impossible to render.

But, no! he was not mistaken. It was Wang the philosopher, and Yin-Pang, Houal, Pao-Shen, and Tim, his Canton friends, — the very ones he entertained two months before on the flower-boat on the River of Pearls, the companions of his youth, the witnesses of his farewell to bachelor-life.

Kin-Fo could not believe his eyes. He was at home in the dining-room in his yamen at Shang-hai.

"If it is you," he cried, addressing Wang, "if it is not your shadow, speak to me!"

"It is I, my friend," answered the philosopher. "Will you forgive your old master the last and somewhat rude lesson in philosophy which he felt it necessary to give you?"

"What!" cried Kin-Fo, "was it you, you, Wang?"

"It was I," answered Wang, "I, who only took upon myself the mission of depriving you of life to prevent another from doing it. I, who knew before you did that you were not ruined, and that the time would come when you would no longer wish to die. My former companion, Lao-Shen, who has become submissive, and who will hence-forth be the strongest support of the government, desired to aid me in teaching you the worth of life by bringing you face to face with death. If

I forsook you in the midst of your terrible anguish, — and, what is worse, made you run round the country, as was almost inhuman to do, — although it made my heart bleed, it was because I was sure that you were pursuing happiness, and would find it on the way."

Kin-Fo threw himself into Wang's arms, who pressed him warmly to his heart.

"My poor Wang!" he said, very much moved, "if I had been the only one to run about the country! What trouble have I not caused you? How much you have had to run about yourself! and what a bath I made you take from the bridge at Palikao!"

"Ah, yes, that bath!" answered Wang, laughing. "It made me fear for my fifty-five years and my philosophy; for I was very warm, and the water was very cold. But, bah! I came out of it all right; and one never runs nor swims so well as when for others."

"For others!" said Kin-Fo gravely. "Yes, it is for others one must learn to do every thing; for there lies the secret of happiness."

Soun now entered, pale as a man can only be when seasickness has tortured him for forty-eight mortal hours: for the unfortunate valet, as well as his master, had been obliged to make that voyage from Fou-Ning to Shang-hai again; and under what conditions, one could judge by the looks of his face.

Kin-Fo, after releasing himself from Wang's embrace, clasped the hands of his friends.

"Really, I like this so much better!" he said. "I have been a fool till now."

"And you may become a sage," answered the philosopher.

"I will try," said Kin-Fo; "and I must begin at once, and see about putting my affairs in order. A little piece of paper has been running round the world that has been the cause of too much trouble to allow me to be indifferent about it. What has become of the cursed letter I gave you, my dear Wang? Did it really go out of your hands? I should be glad to see it; for what if it should get lost again? If Lao-Shen still keeps it, he cannot attach importance to a mere scrip of paper; and I should be sorry to have it fall into hands that would be — less considerate."

At this every one began to laugh.

"My friends," said Wang, "Kin-Fo has really profited by his adventures, and is no longer our former indifferent friend; for he reasons like a methodical man of business."

"All this does not give me back my letter," resumed Kin-Fo, — "my absurd letter. I confess without shame that I shall not feel easy till I have burned it, and have seen the ashes scattered to the four winds."

"Seriously, then, you value that letter?" asked Wang.

"Certainly," answered Kin-Fo. "Would you be so cruel as to keep it as a guaranty against a return of folly on my part?"

"No."

"Well?"

"Well, my dear pupil, there is only one obstacle in the way of your wishes, and unfortunately it does not come from me; for Lao-Shen has not your letter, nor have I."

"You have not my letter?"

"No."

"Have you destroyed it?"

"No, alas! no."

"Were you so imprudent as to trust it to the hands of any one else?"

"Yes."

"To whom? to whom?" said Kin-Fo eagerly, his patience at an end. "Tell me, to whom?"

"To some one who desired to return it to no one but yourself."

At this moment the charming Le-ou, who was concealed behind a screen, and had lost nothing of the scene, now appeared, holding the famous letter at the end of her pretty little fingers, and waving it in playful defiance.

Kin-Fo held out his arms to her.

"No, no! patience a while longer, if you please!" said the amiable woman, pretending to hide behind the screen. "Business before every thing, O my wise husband!"

And, holding the letter before his eyes, she said, —

"Does my little younger brother recognize his deed?"

"Do I recognize it?" cried Kin-Fo. "Who other than myself could have written that foolish letter?"

"Well, then, before every thing," answered Le-ou, "since you have shown a proper desire, tear, burn, and annihilate that imprudent letter. Let nothing remain of the foolish Kin-Fo who wrote it."

"Agreed," said Kin-Fo, holding it up to a light. "But now, my dear love, permit your husband to give his wife one loving kiss, and beg her to preside over this very happy repast. I feel very much inclined to do honor to it."

"And we also!" cried the five guests. "It makes one very hungry to be very happy."

A few days later, the imperial prohibition being removed, the marriage took place.

The young married couple loved each other, and were likely to continue to love each other forever. A thousand, ten thousand joys await them in life.

One must go to China to prove this.

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